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The Newspaper for Members of the National Education Association

NEA's Historic Read Across America
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Keeping Kids In Focus

10 ways to help students who have trouble paying attention

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NEA member Sandra Rief and student Ryan Streenan

NEA Today

March 1998
Volume 16, Number 7

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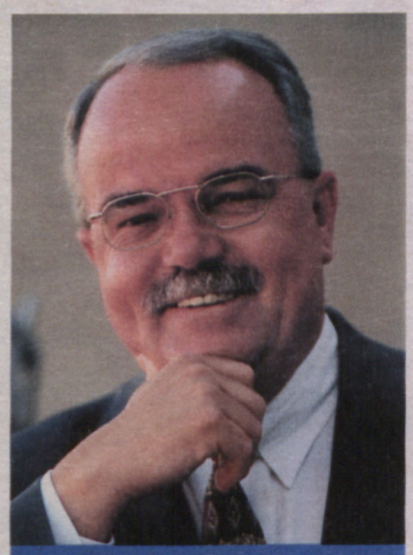
Teaching Right from Wrong

President's Viewpoint

Teaching values to today's kids is an urgent prerequisite to learning.



Bob Chase

Earlier in this century, there was a small, well-meaning band of educators who pursued the idea that children left pretty much to their own devices in an "educationally enriched situation" will learn what they need to learn when they need to learn it.

Based on a misreading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Dewey, these experiments in "progressive" education failed miserably.

As any teacher who has ever pulled elementary school bus duty or monitored a high school study hall can tell you, Aristotle was right: Children require direction from vigilant and caring adults—indeed they crave it, even teenagers.

The moral and intellectual life of a child cannot be left to impulse or chance. "All adults involved with children either help or thwart children's growth and development, whether we like it, intend it, or not," reports psychiatrist and school reformer James Comer.

Of course public school employees, be they bus drivers, custodians, secretaries, or teachers, bear a special responsibility. The only adults who have a greater impact on a child's life than us are those in the child's family and the child's church, synagogue, or mosque.

Children's capacity for goodness makes discipline possible, but their capacity for chaos makes discipline necessary.

Regrettably, the word "discipline" causes untold confusion.

Some recoil from the word because it conjures up the days when the three *R*s were "taught to the tune of the hickory stick." For them, "discipline" has only negative connotations and is synonymous with punishment and regimentation.

For others, especially those who harbor an overly romanticized view of 19th century schooling, discipline is a comforting, still-life portrait of well-starched children sitting in orderly rows at their desks, hands folded, ready to be instructed.

The romantics conveniently forget that those children were, in real life, less angelic than they looked in the old photographs. By contrast, most of today's kids are not nearly as bad as they look to some adults.

Let's be clear about discipline. It is a pedagogical prerequisite. Learning cannot occur in chaos.

Discipline is an integral part of school life—the sum total of all that public school employees do in buses, parking lots, playgrounds, auditoriums, cafeterias, hallways, stairwells, gyms, offices, and classrooms to instill basic values in students, values such as honesty, taking responsibility for oneself, and respecting others.

Walk into a school where discipline has broken down, and you can see it, feel it, and hear it, immediately—this is not a place where learning is revered.

Discipline is the greatest challenge for many of today's educators.

A poll taken a few years ago by the American Federation of Teachers revealed some truly appalling numbers: 66 percent of the AFT members surveyed reported having been verbally abused by a student, 32 percent had been threatened or assaulted, and 20 percent had administrators refuse to remove a disruptive student.

A breakdown of urban versus nonurban teachers revealed that the discipline problems in city schools are worse, but only by a slim margin.

A number of factors contribute to the complexity of today's discipline problem. Overcrowded and crumbling school buildings. Too many students per teacher. No alternative settings for chronically disruptive students. Inconsistent enforcement of conduct codes by administrators. And, yes, public education employees who are ill-prepared to deal with today's students.

Veteran teachers often remark about how kids have changed over the last 30 years. They are much less respectful of adult authority.

They seem to lack "sacred or moral moorings," to quote Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense Fund.

Or, as one NEA member wrote in a letter to me: "Many of these children are like thistles blowing in the wind."

There's nothing new about teachers and educational support personnel teaching values.

What is new is the urgency.

There are too many children today growing up believing money is the measure of all things.

They are growing up in a culture that values and respects them only as consumers of products—basketball shoes, down-filled jackets, music CDs, and alcohol—not as thinkers and truth seekers.

We—parents, educators, and other concerned adults—must continue fighting to bring nourishment to these children's souls before they succumb to a lifetime of spiritual anorexia.

Can We Talk?

Merger talks between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers are progressing. What do you think about our possible uniting to form a new organization? To share your thoughts, send an E-mail message to me at BobChase@nea.org.

NEA at a Glance

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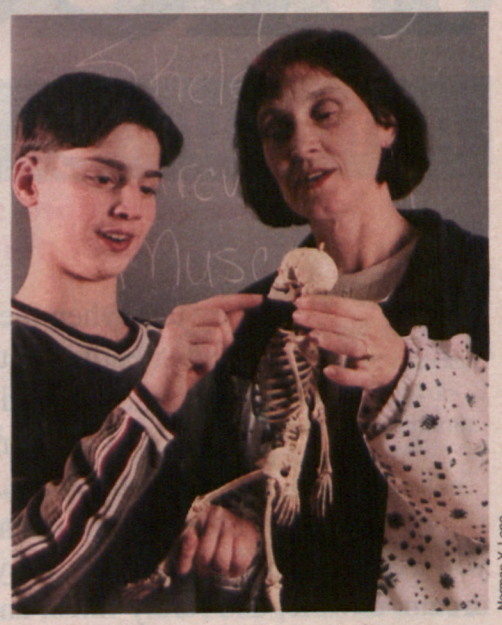
NEA Today this Month

Unity in Education?

In 1995, delegates to NEA's annual Representative Assembly deemed merger between NEA and the American Federation of Teachers "essential" to achieving NEA's longstanding goal of uniting all education employees. Unity talks between NEA and AFT have been going on ever since. Look for a complete update on the progress of these unity talks in next month's issue of *NEA Today*.

Cover Story

4 Keeping Kids In Focus
With more and more kids having trouble sitting still, managing classrooms today is harder than ever before. To make it a bit easier, *NEA Today* asked dozens of educators—including New Jersey teacher Marlene Huschke, right—plus psychologists, counselors, and social workers for their best ideas on how to help kids pay attention. Will your ideas match their collected wisdom?



Norman Y. Lono

Cover photo by Paul Body

Newsmakers

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On March 2, NEA launches the nation's largest literacy event. Find out how folks across the country are celebrating.

The Cat in the Hat™ © Dr. Seuss Enterprises L.P. 1957, 1977. All rights reserved.

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9 In the Community
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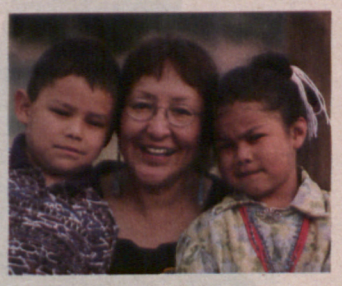

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46 Letters
An Iowa science teacher—in Antarctica for a month doing research—sends fascinating notes home. Plus, your comments on issues big and small.

Keeping Ki

Managing a classroom is tougher than ever, as more and more students can't seem to focus on the lesson at hand. Here's some help.

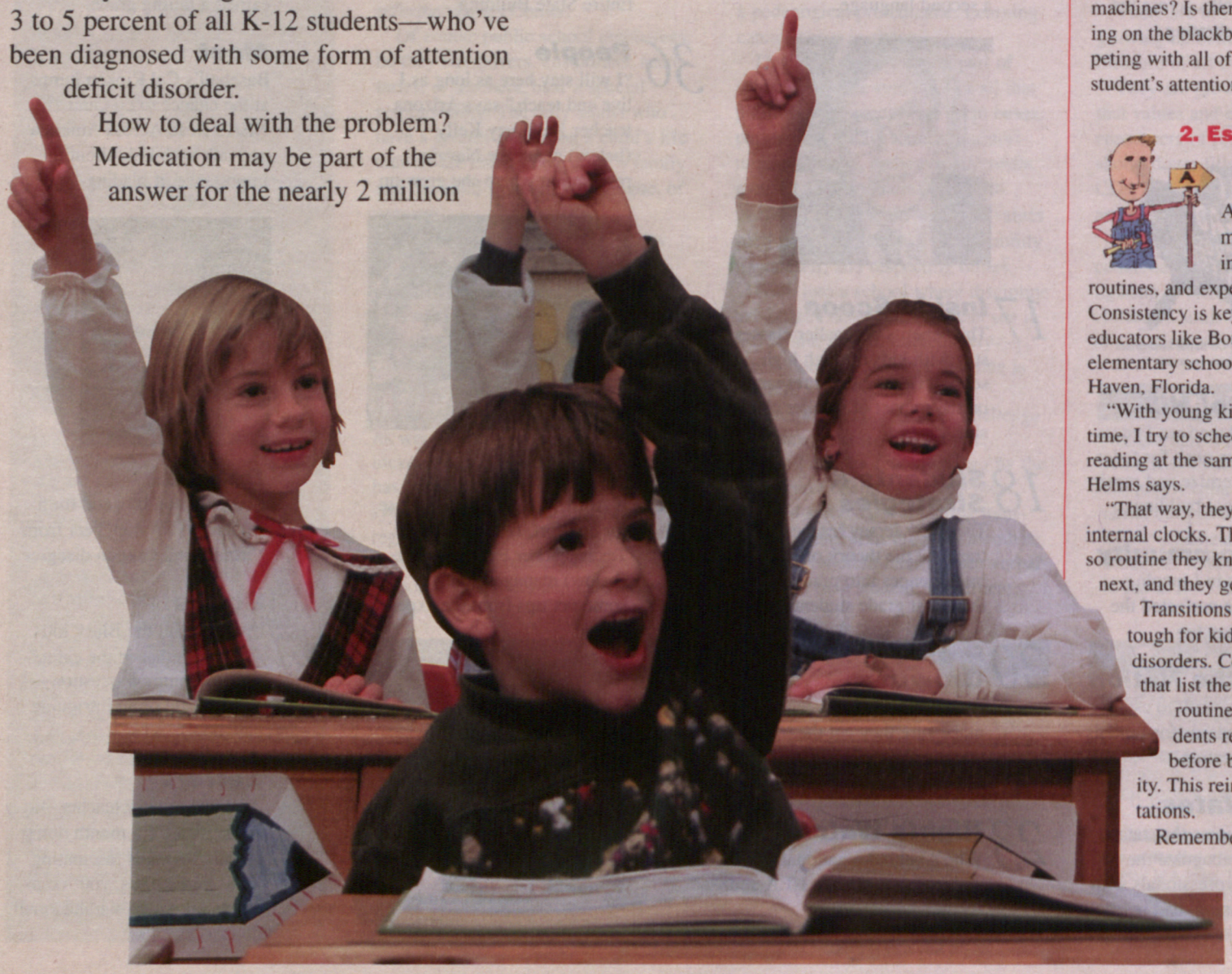
They talk when they should read silently, visit peers when they should work alone, run and jump when they should walk, and blurt out comments when you ask them to listen quietly. They daydream, dawdle, and rarely finish anything. They are the students who have real trouble paying attention.

Sure, some kids just have a lot of energy. But the unfocused behavior others exhibit is uncontrollable and ongoing and can seriously hamper their ability to learn. These children may be among the millions—some 3 to 5 percent of all K-12 students—who've been diagnosed with some form of attention deficit disorder.

How to deal with the problem? Medication may be part of the answer for the nearly 2 million children whose parents and pediatricians have determined that Ritalin and other drugs help them concentrate.

But for most kids who have trouble paying attention, effective classroom management —often referred to as the toughest part of any teaching job—can help.

To make managing classrooms a bit easier, *NEA Today* asked dozens of educators, psychologists, school counselors, and social workers for their best ideas on how to help kids pay attention. Their collected wisdom —tried-and-true, rarely new—is summed up here.



10 Ways to

1. Alter the classroom environment.

Sitting fidgety kids close to you is one of the best moves you can make in the classroom. You can get kids' attention when they're off-task by using direct eye contact or a tap on the shoulder. Or have a student who's easily distracted sit near a student who's a role model in the behavior department.

You might try allowing students to sit at alternative desks or chairs in the room to accommodate their need for movement.

Try to reduce the number of distractions in the room. Are there too many posters and pictures on the walls? Is the lighting too bright? Is there too much noise from toys or machines? Is there unnecessary writing on the blackboard? You're competing with all of these factors for the student's attention.

2. Establish routines and structure.

A classroom management system that includes clear rules, routines, and expectations is essential. Consistency is key, according to educators like Bonnie Helms, an elementary school teacher in Winter Haven, Florida.

"With young kids who can't tell time, I try to schedule activities like reading at the same time each day," Helms says.

"That way, they're listening to their internal clocks. The activity becomes so routine they know what's coming next, and they get to it."

Transitions to new activities are tough for kids with attention disorders. Consider using charts that list the steps for various routines. Then have students review the steps before beginning the activity. This reinforces your expectations.

Remember, students with attention deficit react in the moment and often forget class

ids in Focus

Help Kids Who Have Trouble Paying Attention

rules. Review rules every day, especially before scheduled activities. Have students give examples of following the rules.

3. Liven up your presentation style.

Hands-on demonstrations, student performances, and interactive equipment are real attention-grabbers in the classroom.

Instead of having kids take turns reading passages from a novel, let them act out the scenes. Use manipulatives and raw materials to illustrate math concepts.

Computers, calculators, tape recorders, and videos are other great tools that get students actively involved in lessons.

For subject areas that require a lecture format, eliminate the "drone factor" by raising and lowering your voice. Or speed up and slow down your delivery.

4. Change the nature of assignments.

"My students with attention disorders have great difficulty with reading and writing because these skills require concentration," says Marlene Huschke, a physical education and health teacher at South Brunswick High School in Trenton, New Jersey.

To help students out, Huschke provides options on how to complete assignments.

"For a project on infectious disease, I ask most kids to write their project, but I assign visual projects to kids with attention problems," she says.

Pat Aust, a social worker for grades K-6 in East Hartford (Connecticut) Public Schools, advocates "chunking" long assignments.

"As kids approach middle school, their assignments get longer. It helps to break long assignments and projects into smaller chunks.

"If you give kids one long list of tasks, they get overwhelmed," Aust says. "Instead, give them five separate pieces of paper with one or two tasks on each one."

5. Provide immediate positive feedback.

Rewards and privileges are important motivators to help students pay attention and adhere to class rules and structure.

Says Sandy Rief, a special education teacher in San Diego, California, and author of the book *How To Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children*: "Kids with attention problems are always being told what they are doing wrong. It's better to let students know exactly what they are doing right."

Rief, a member of the San Diego Teachers Association, says, "Kids with attention/impulsivity problems often can't work successfully toward long-term rewards, no matter how appealing the incentive."

She suggests using reinforcers like tickets, points, or stars—awarded in shorter, more frequent intervals and redeemable for something motivating like breakfast or lunch with the teacher, a computer game alone or with a friend, or a no-homework coupon.

6. Don't be afraid to discipline.

Since negative feedback can also be effective in getting kids to see the value of paying attention, educators should establish clear and immediate consequences for students who break rules.

To deal with misbehavior, many teachers suggest removing privileges, tokens, or activities. You'll want to plan in advance which behaviors will lead to which consequences and apply the consequence consistently.

Incremental consequences, rather than all-or-nothing losses, work well. For example, rather than losing the privilege of caring for a class pet, have students lose a certain number of days of care, based on the severity of the incident.

Work to prevent behavior problems before they occur. Find out what sets off a student by keeping a written record of events just prior to and following the behavior. Look for patterns. Then look for ways to eliminate as many potential triggers as possible.

7. Help students with their organizational skills.

Messy notebooks and desks are a trademark of kids with attention disorders.

"I have one boy in my class whose notebook looks like a bomb went off in it," says Huschke, who uses color-coded file folders to help him get organized and keep track of assignments.

Terry Cook, a social worker in Decatur, Illinois, says her school gives some students organizational planners.

"The planners—which must be initialed by parents daily—include dates, school rules, consequences for misbehavior, and class assignments," Cook explains.

Other strategies: Take a few minutes at the end of class to lead students in writing down assignments. And use colored paper to help students file their assignments—put all spelling lists on yellow paper, for example, while science homework is copied on green sheets.

8. Collaborate with parents.

Russell Barkley, a professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, calls the daily school-home report card "one of the best strategies for helping kids with attention deficit that I've seen in 20 years."

Barkley suggests listing a desired behavior—for example, "cooperates with peers"—on a 3x5 file card, then creating blank columns near each behavior for a daily rating system, which is forwarded to parents each night.

"Parents love it because they get an accurate and daily report on how the child is behaving," Barkley says. More importantly, he notes, parents can use the daily report card to create a reward system at home.

"Parents can use big rewards that really matter to kids, like use of TV, computers, and video games."

9. Be tolerant.

The worst thing you can do is to write off a student with attention problems, says California special ed teacher Sandy Rief.

"So often teachers think a student who doesn't follow directions, pay attention, or complete assignments is goofing off," she says.

"But if the student has ADD, teachers have to understand the nature of the disorder and have some tolerance and patience." Rief urges teachers to provide the structure and support these students need and find their strengths and positive attributes.

"It's easy to forget to do that," she adds, "when you're seeing a lot of negative behavior."

Robert Brooks, a psychologist at Harvard, suggests looking for ways to boost students' self-esteem. "Give the student one job or responsibility, like passing out materials or taking papers to the school office," he says. "It gives them a sense of pride and a way they can be successful at a school activity."

10. Don't give up!

The prospect of setting up incentives and reward systems—and rearranging classroom structure to accommodate a handful of students—may not seem worth the time.

But, notes Linda Pfiffner, author of *All About ADHD: The Complete Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers*, the time you spend creating systems will save you work in the long run.

"There's no greater reward," sums up Pfiffner, "than helping students become successful when they're quite at risk for failure."

What Do You Think?

There are many more ways to help kids who have trouble paying attention. Which ones work best for you? To add your opinions, experiences, and suggestions to this discussion of attention disorders, go to NEA Today *Online at www.nea.org/neatoday.*

Tips for Dealing with Parents

What's the best way to talk to parents about a student's attention problems?

An article in the December 1997 issue of Good Housekeeping *called Ritalin "the pill that teachers push" and accused educators of encouraging Ritalin use, not for student success but for the ease of classroom control.*

Media misperceptions like this have made teachers wary of talking to parents about attention deficit disorders and learning disabilities—especially when medication might be involved.

How can educators navigate this touchy subject? NEA member Sandra Rief, a 20-year special education veteran and author, answered the question in a recent conversation with NEA Today*'s Karen Gutloff.*

Should teachers tell parents if they suspect a child has an attention deficit disorder?

Teachers may suspect that a student has ADHD, but they are not in a position to make a diagnosis and should be very careful not to be perceived by parents as doing so.

Just because it looks like ADHD doesn't mean it is. The problem could be learning disabilities, depression, anxiety disorders, or the results of living in high-stress situations. If you focus too narrowly on ADHD, other important issues requiring treatment may be overlooked.

What risks do educators face by talking directly to parents about Ritalin?

One problem is that parents may feel teachers are pushing them into medical interventions while not doing enough within the educational setting to help. It can appear that the teacher is giving up on the child, and placing the responsibility upon the parents to "do something about this kid."

Paul Body

San Diego teacher Sandra Rief is a classroom expert on attention issues.

Often, when parents respond to a teacher's suggestion to visit a physician, they do so without any supporting data from the school. Once in the doctor's office, children don't typically exhibit ADHD behaviors. So parents will often be told by the doctor that their child could not have ADHD, and that the school is wrong.

Also, recommending medical intervention for a student's behavior could lead to personal liability issues.

Then how should you proceed if you think a child needs additional treatment?

A team approach—like a student study team—works best. This allows teachers to refer students they have concerns about to a school team, which might include administrators, teachers, and support staff. Together, the team plans for school interventions and makes recommendations.

Parents are typically invited to team meetings. Parents need to be assured the school is doing everything possible on behalf of their child.

What kind of information would be useful for parents to know?

Teachers should describe behaviors, share observations, and tell parents the interventions and accommodations they're using to help the student.

For example, a teacher might say, "Sean is very distracted in class, and it's hard for him to stay on-task for more than two or three minutes during seat work. I've moved him up front close to me so I can help cue and focus him, and I've reduced the amount of seat work required to make it more manageable for him."

Or, "Shanta has a very difficult time during transitions. I signal her and prepare her before we change activities and give extra assistance during those challenging times."

What if parents refuse to take their child to a doctor?

Fortunately, as teachers, we don't need for the student to have a diagnosis or label to implement the effective educational strategies and interventions for teaching and managing students with ADHD behaviors. We can still try techniques such as using preferential seating, increasing structure, and helping students get organized.

What else can teachers do?

It's very important for teachers to understand they have a legal and personal responsibility to carry out the interventions written into a student's IEP and 504 plans. Teachers need to be aware which students have such plans, and what the specific accommodations are for each student.

Resources

- *How To Reach and Teach ADD/ADHD Children* ($27) and *The ADD/ADHD Checklist: An Easy Reference for Parents & Teachers* ($12), both written by teacher Sandra Rief. Prentice Hall. Available from Educational Resource Specialists, P.O. Box 19207, San Diego, CA 92159, 800/682-3528.
- *All About ADHD: The Complete Practical Guide for Classroom Teachers.* Linda J. Pfiffner. Scholastic Professional Books, $16.95, 800/325-6149.
- The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs has a packet of materials for educators on attention deficit disorders, including *101 Ways to Help Children With ADD Learn: Tips From Successful Teachers.* Free. Call 202/205-8105.
- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders provides information on coping with attention deficit disorders to parents and teachers. The organization has local chapters throughout the country. For more, contact CHADD, 499 Northwest 70th Ave., Suite 101, Plantation, FL 33317. On the Web: www.chadd.org.
- The ADD Warehouse is a leading resource for the understanding and treatment of attention deficit disorders. For a catalog of books, videos, training programs, and assessment tools, contact the ADD Warehouse at 300 Northwest 70th Ave., Suite 102, Plantation, FL 33317, 800/233-9273.
- The National Center for Learning Disabilities has an information and referral service for parents, individuals with learning disabilities, and educators. Call 888/575-7373.

Are Attention Problems Really on the Rise?

Some say the only thing increasing is the amount of attention we're paying to attention disorders. Others say the number of kids needing help for attention disorders is greatly exaggerated. Here are a few views:

"There's no evidence that attention deficit disorder is increasing among children. What is increasing is the number of children finally being diagnosed with the disorder. This behavior has always been with us, we're just doing a better job acknowledging what the problem is. Previously, these kids were overlooked, retained, or just left school early. The good news is they are now getting help."

—Russell A. Barkley, professor of psychiatry and neurology, University of Massachusetts Medical Center

"My guess is that attention disorders probably would not be getting so much attention if it were not for the concern over kids taking drugs to control this behavior. Drug use has gone up steadily. Also, the diagnosis has changed somewhat. Each time they've broadened the criteria to include, for example, impulsivity, there are more kids who are identified."

—Dr. Daniel Safer, child psychology professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

"ADD is a questionable diagnosis. There is no evidence that there is such a thing. Many responsible researchers say it's not real. There is such a rush to drug kids because we live in a country that overmedicates.

When kids act out in class, they're trying to tell us something. We have to consider the other social problems affecting millions of children. Instead of silencing them with drugs, we need to find out what their real problems are."

—Judi Hirsch, K-12 resource specialist, Arts/Far West School, Oakland, California

Across the Nation

Time To Read Across America

NEA members make Read Across America the biggest and best literacy event of all time.

Cal Ripken, Jr., is poised to help NEA members set a new record. As co-chair of NEA's Read Across America, Ripken—and thousands of other celebrities big and small—promise to make the celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2 the nation's biggest literacy event.

Ripken will be joined by James Earl Jones, Kirk Douglas, children's author and illustrator Tomie dePaola, Governor Mel Carnahan of Missouri, Al Roker, Secretary of Education Richard Riley, Levar Burton, the Cat in the Hat, and thousands of just plain folks.

At presstime, more than 1,000 NEA members had pledged to organize reading rowdiness. Here's a sampling:

■ **There'll be early birds.** At one school in Portland, Oregon, NEA members will provide muffins for moms, donuts for dads, and a nice place for families to read together.

■ **And a few late birds.** In Middlesex County, New Jersey, people will wait till Saturday to hold a birthday party at the local mall.

■ **Books will change hands.** Members of the North Carolina Association of Educators plan to donate 10,000 books to needy children.

In West Lake City, Utah, students with homes will buy books for students without homes.

In Haverhill, Massachusetts, 31 members of the business community will read and then donate books to the city's 31 first grade classrooms.

■ **And . . . hands will change books.** In Suffield, Connecticut, students will make new book covers for books in their school library.

■ **Some will think big.** In Washington, D.C., a neighborhood learning center will recruit Senators and school principals to read with kids.

■ **Some will think small.** The Utah Education Association will give a book to every baby born in the Salt Lake City area on March 2.

■ **Some may be thinking too small.** In Memphis, Tennessee, one mother reports plans to gather her entire Seuss collection and reread every book with her son, age 13.

■ **Some will eat well.** In Haverhill, Massachusetts, celebrity chefs from local restaurants will go to local schools to cook green eggs and ham for breakfast.

■ **Not so sure about others.** In Gulfport, Mississippi, one teacher will serve up green eggs and ham *and* red-fish-blue-fish.

■ **Some schools will do more of the same.** Modesto, California, will host its sixth annual community read-in, involving more than 1,400 volunteer readers, who will purchase books and donate them to the school library.

■ **Others will get a new name.** In Bristol, Tennessee, Holton View Elementary will become Seuss View Elementary—just for the day.

■ **From East to West, young to old.** In Fall River, Massachusetts, third graders will read Seuss books to kindergartners.

In Kenai, Alaska, members of the retired teachers Association will read with children at the local library.

■ **There's more good news from libraries.** In Coffeyville, Kansas, the local library will grant amnesty on overdue book fines to all participants.

And all 23 libraries in King County, Washington, plan story hours for the night of March 2.

■ **Some will compete.** In Titusville, Pennsylvania, a reading incentive program will end on March 2.

In Wayne, New Jersey, parents and students will read 10 books together over a two-month period. Students who complete the challenge will receive a medal on March 2.

■ **Some will repeat.** In Walla Walla, Washington, students will devote three days to "reading, reading, reading."

■ **And . . . some are just neat.** In Fremont, California, a father will have a neighborhood reading party. His son, who is deaf, will read with a sign language interpreter, while dad reads aloud to other kids on the block.

In Cherry Creek, Colorado, National Honor Society members will buy a children's book, read it on tape, and then give both the tape and the book to a local elementary school.

For a list of hundreds of other planned activities, go to www.nea.org/readacross.

Sandy Schaeffer

On March 2, older students will read to younger students all across America. Here, Virginia third grade teacher Lynda Gallagher looks on as Jessica Southall, 16, reads with Bridgette Crenshaw, eight.

Heroes & Zeroes

Kudos to actor Kirk Douglas for putting his money and his mouth where his

AP/Wide World

heart is. His cash—$655,000—went to 31 Los Angeles schools for playground equipment and athletic fields. As for his words, Douglas will read a Dr. Seuss book on camera, for a video that will be shown at a celebrity celebration of NEA's Read Across America on March 2.

An All-Too-Tidy Award to *Good Housekeeping* for a recent article on Ritalin use entitled, "The Pill That Teachers Push." Using a series of one-sided anecdotes, the article tries to convince readers that unimaginative teachers would rather dope up kids than teach them. That may be tidy—but it's simply not true.

If you haven't thanked a bank lately, take a minute to salute MBNA Bank for its $50,000 contribution to NEA's Read Across America. The Bank's more than generous support will boost the chances that every child in America will discover the joy of reading sometime soon.

Negative Nielsen's to the WB Network for its new series, "Dawson's Creek," which flows over any reasonable boundaries. In the season premiere, a tenth grader and his 40-something English teacher have sex—together, no less—in a park at night. Give us a break—and the clicker.

The cheers on the bus go round and round for NEA member and bus driver Cathy Erwin, who was recently elected president of the Arizona Association for Pupil Transportation, a slot typically filled by an administrator. "There's something terribly wrong," Erwin said, "when we pay more to have our garbage transported than we do our children." Now that's driving for the goal!

On Capitol Hill

Holes, Leaks—and Learning?

Kids can't learn in crumbling schools, but Congress can learn how to pick up the tab for repairs.

In the photo you see on this page, Leadville, Colorado, school superintendent Peg Portscheller and some West Park Elementary School students gaze at a chasm in their school floor, jackhammered open to reach leaky water pipes that are as perforated as sprinklers.

The same photo—and others like it from schools around the country—were shown to reporters recently, as NEA and the American Federation of Teachers launched their "Modern Schools, Better Learning" campaign.

The NEA and AFT goal: to win federal aid for the repair and modernization of schools nationwide.

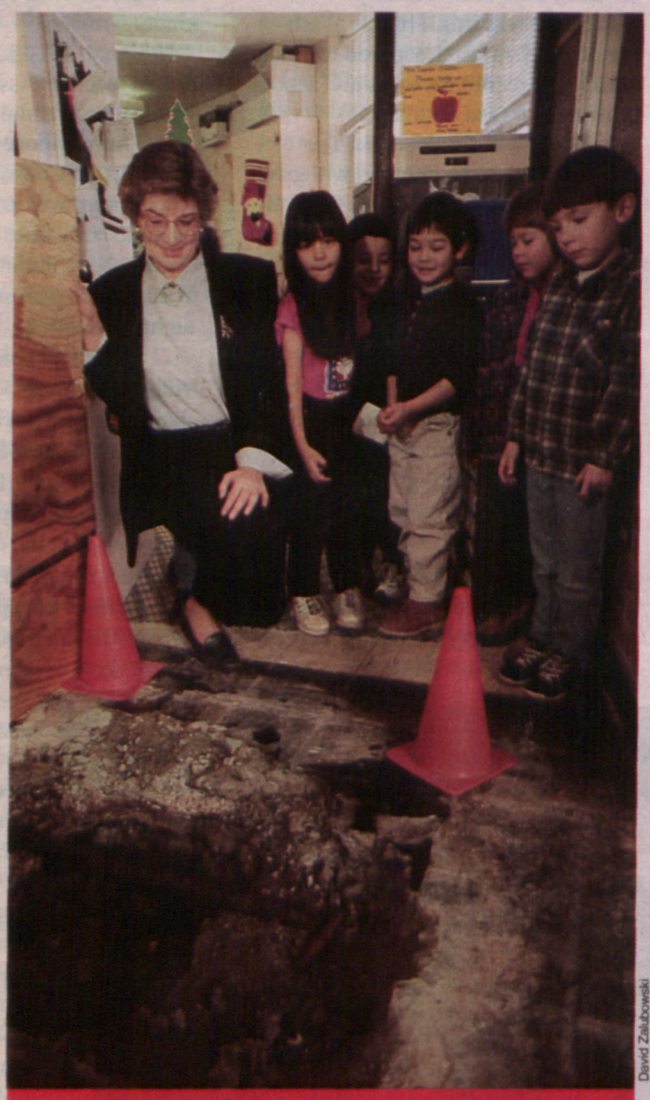
Leadville's four aging schools illustrate many districts' need for immediate help.

"We've got one challenge after another," Portscheller says—"leaky roofs, substandard and hazardous wiring, and inadequate heating and cooling systems, and more."

"We often feel as though we are at the equator or the North Pole," adds Lake County Education Association member Mary Ann Tapey, a kindergarten teacher at West Park. "In the winter, children wear coats inside, and in summer, we take off as much as we can and still remain decent."

Squeezing more money from local sources seems nearly impossible, given the collapse of the region's mining industry. Twice, hard-pressed local taxpayers have voted no in referenda on school repair bonds.

And, given low local property values, "one extra mill of assessed value in Leadville brings in only $45,000," explains Portscheller. "Just over the Rockies, in Aspen, that same mill hauls in $1.8 million."



David Zalubowski

Superintendent Peg Portscheller and students at this Colorado elementary need this hole like a hole in the head.

Backed against a wall, parents in Leadville and several other struggling districts have filed a lawsuit alleging that the state—now enjoying a healthy budget surplus—has violated its own constitutional requirement for "thorough and uniform" school funding.

"Help from the federal or state government, or a combination, would be greatly appreciated by my community," stresses Portscheller, former president of the North Dakota Education Association.

The NEA-AFT proposal calls for $30 billion in federal subsidies over 10 years to finance school building repair, renovation, and construction.

The package includes $28 billion for leveraging additional funding at the state and local levels—such as bond interest subsidies—and $2 billion for direct grants to needy districts for short-term emergency repairs.

As a first step, President Clinton's Fiscal Year 1999 budget calls for more than $10 billion in school infrastructure spending over 10 years.

In making his case with reporters, NEA President Bob Chase cited a recent bipartisan survey of 1,001 registered voters, commissioned by NEA and the AFT, that shows 76 percent support for the $30 billion, 10-year school modernization plan.

"Americans understand that unless we take steps now to modernize school facilities," Chase said, "classrooms will only become more crowded, technology more outdated, and students less prepared to meet the challenges of the future."

"All of these conditions influence learning," added AFT President Sandra Feldman, "especially overcrowding. Students cannot get the individual attention they need when classrooms are bursting at the seams."

For More Information

For more on the NEA-AFT Modern Schools, Better Learning campaign, point your Web browser to www.nea.org/society/modern/. To find out what you can do to gain support for the plan, see the column at far left.

What You Can Do

Here's how you can participate in the "Modern Schools, Better Learning" lobbying campaign:

1) Urge your Senators and House members to support the NEA-AFT proposal. Write to the U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510 and the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515. Or call 202/224-3121 and ask for your members of Congress.

2) Ask lawmakers if they:

- Support a federal role in providing financial assistance for school modernization. If not, why?
- Support a 10-year, $30 billion plan that would provide a mix of interest subsidies for state and local school construction bonds, partial subsidy of debt principal, and some direct grants to needy districts. If not, why?
- Have a position on other Congressional proposals for school modernization or favor a particular type of modernization funding.

You can report lawmakers' comments—and recommend follow-up—by contacting the government relations director of your NEA state affiliate.

3) Ask state and local officials to support this proposal and urge their members of Congress to do likewise.

Calling All Friends of Ed

NEA and the AFT aren't alone in calling for $30 billion in federal aid to modernize schools. Other groups supporting this or similar proposals include the National School Boards Association, National PTA, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Council of the Great City Schools, and the American Institute of Architects.

Down Another Avenue

Besides addressing discipline and teacher quality, the AFT-NEA Joint Council formed last fall is working to develop innovative models for attracting investors—including public-private partnerships—for school renovation and construction projects.

The Bottom Line

Surpluses: States ended the 1997 fiscal year with over $14 billion more revenue than expenses, but don't expect to see widespread new commitments to bolster school funding. Analysts are predicting that 25 states will cut taxes in 1998.

High-tech discounts: In February, every telecommunications firm doing business between states started paying special fees that will finance big discounts for school Internet access. NEA helped convince Congress to incorporate this discount into law.

Where the dollars go: A new study by the Center for the Future of Children in California says school districts now devote 60 percent of their revenue to instruction, with most of that going for teacher salaries. Another 10 percent is spent on administration.

Inequality: The gap between rich and poor households continues to widen, particularly in New York, New Mexico, and Louisiana, the three most unequal states. The incomes of American households in the bottom 20 percent have dropped 3 percent over 10 years.

In the Community

Partnerships That Pay Interest

One school district, 425 school-business partnerships. How do the folks in Lincoln, Nebraska, do it?

You can cite this school district's 425 partnerships with more than 800 businesses, community groups, and nonprofit agencies. Or note that each of its 31,000 students averages 37 contacts a year with an outside organization. Or mention that the schools see a $10 return for every dollar invested in their partnerships.

But these stats won't tell you why students in Lincoln, Nebraska, are so career-savvy or why their schools enjoy so much public support.

The real reason, says Helen Wegman Sellentin, a teacher at Northeast High, is that Lincoln's partnerships "are based on human, not financial relationships. We ask for people's brains and time, not their money."

Sellentin, who coordinates nine partnerships at her school—including ones with small firms like Boomers Printing and big corporations like United Airlines—sees evidence of this humanity every time business volunteers drop by to chat with students about their work.

"I see the excitement in our visitors' faces," Sellentin marvels. "They ask, 'How much more time do I have?' and I tell them, 'As long as you want.'"

Lincoln schools have been making new friends, one at a time, since the district, the Lincoln Education Association, and business allies founded Ventures in Partnerships (VIP) in 1987.

Now jointly funded by the district and Association, VIP was formed to "get business and community people to understand our schools better and become a crucial part of them," says Association President Dan Studer.

Another key VIP goal is to "broaden students' vision of careers available to them," says Sellentin.

"A certain percentage of students gaze at the ceiling in class," she explains, "and ask why adults are torturing them like this. The more they get out into the community, the more they'll see how that algebra is used."

If you haven't guessed by now, VIP is not your ordinary school-business partnership. Here's what sets it apart:

■ **VIP is teacher-driven.** The 2,200-member Lincoln Education Association contributes $5 per member per year to VIP. That buys teachers a real voice in program budgeting, planning, and evaluation.

"This isn't a top-down operation," Studer stresses. "If you want a successful partnership program, teachers must be involved in its design and implementation. Only they can really see what it does for students."

■ **VIP is housed in every school building.** Each of Lincoln's 52 schools has a VIP teacher liaison for each of its organizational partners. The district and Association support these liaisons when they visit partners—to explore, shadow a job, or plan a lesson—through both contractual extra-duty pay and a large substitute pool.

■ **VIP really puts the word out.** Through regular drive-time radio commercials, VIP's full-time executive director, Barbara Hopkins, talks up current partnerships—say, a bank teaching students how interest is calculated—and puts out the call for new partners.

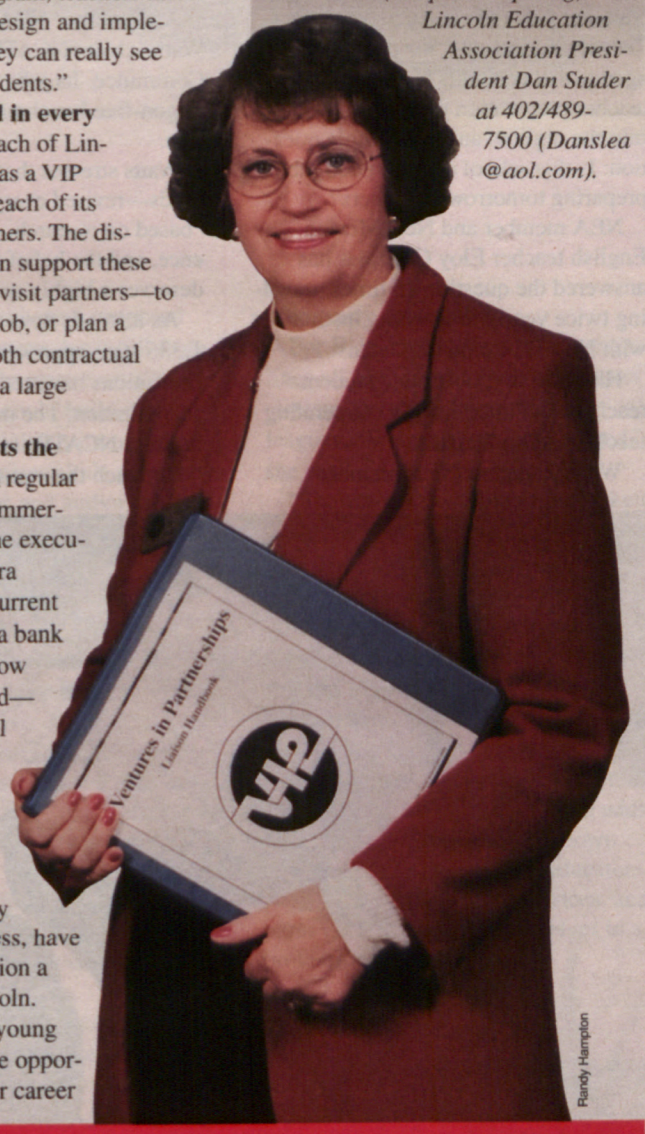
The radio ads, plus a VIP community newsletter and a VIP decal in the window of every participating business, have given public education a high profile in Lincoln.

The winners are young people who have the opportunity to make wiser career choices and bond with volunteers, the school system, and, of course, the Association.

When they hear about the LEA, area residents "don't see some money-grubbing union only interested in salaries," Studer says. "They see an organization that cares about students, the profession, and quality education."

For More Information

Contact VIP Executive Director Barbara Hopkins at 402/436-1950 (bhopkins@lps.org) or Lincoln Education Association President Dan Studer at 402/489-7500 (Danslea@aol.com).



Randy Hampton

Family and consumer sciences teacher Helen Wegman Sellentin coordinates nine school-business partnerships at Northeast High School in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Another Lincoln Link-Up

In Lincoln, Rhode Island, a partnership program matches the academic and technical departments of the William M. Davies Jr. Career and Technical High School with employers, including Sony, Rhode Island Hospital, Motorola, and Midas.

The Davies Teachers Association helps make sure these matches succeed by ensuring that the partnerships are "right for kids and don't take time away" from learning, says DTA President Bill Foley, a social studies teacher.

"When an outside person trains a class," Foley notes, "we make sure a certified teacher is with the students—to assist, learn state-of-the-art skills, and assure the community that a trained teacher is always present."

Adds school partnership coordinator Stephanie Sullivan: "Our visitors benefit by learning effective teaching strategies from Davies instructors."

Partnering for 50 Years

Long before the word "partnership" came into vogue, members of the Fairmont (Minnesota) Education Association were forging links in their rural community.

The 122-member FEA, now celebrating its 50th year as an NEA affiliate, has belonged to the Chamber of Commerce "for many, many years," reports local Secretary-Treasurer Robert Millette.

"We've worked with the Chamber on bond issues and referenda," he adds, "and many faculty members have been involved in the community via the city council, city committees, and Chamber projects."

A 1996 FEA survey found that many local members were officers or leaders in local organizations—20 in civic groups, 36 in churches, 20 in youth activities, and 18 in other groups.

"We maintain partnerships to remind people that the schools are developing the most important resource this community has to offer," explains FEA President Harlan Gorath, "their youth."

Mozart on My Mind: Georgia will soon be handing classical music CDs to the parents of newborns, if lawmakers adopt a proposal advanced by Governor Zell Miller in January. Listening to classical music, some researchers say, can enhance a child's creative processes.

Multiple births: Have trouble telling twins apart in your school? Brace yourself. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that a record 4,594 sets of triplets were born in 1994, a four-fold increase over the past 20 years.

Enrollment pressures: The number of new public schools in America is up almost 200 from last year's 512 total. In all, 45.9 million students started public school classes this past September, up 833,000 kids, or 1.9 percent, over the previous year.

More diverse PhDs: Students from minority groups earned 3,542 doctorates in 1996, a figure up 73 percent since 1986. Among American citizens who earned PhDs from U.S. universities in 1996, nearly half—47 percent—were women.

Around the Nation

Graduates with a Grasp

NEA members are helping shape tough new standards for teaching colleges. If they don't, who will?

It's a tight schedule that never varies. Fly in Sunday, review stacks of documentation, interview everybody from college deans to education students, observe student teachers in the classroom, and deliver a team report by Wednesday.

Board of Examiner teams from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education—*the* professional agency that accredits higher education teacher preparation programs—work into the night to answer a single question: Is this school doing a good job of preparing tomorrow's teachers?

NEA member and New Mexico English teacher Eloy Gonzales has answered the question 15 times, traveling twice yearly to teaching institutions with NCATE examining teams.

His specialty: observing student teachers and interviewing cooperating teachers and principals.

What made this NEA member endure the grueling regimen?

"NEA members need to be involved in setting standards for preservice education," Gonzales says. "If we don't, somebody with less knowledge about teaching will."

About 100 of NCATE's 420 examiners are currently NEA members, and NEA's top three officers sit on the Council's executive board.

For the last year, Gonzales has served as one of six classroom teachers on NCATE's 32-member Unit Accreditation Board, which makes final accreditation decisions.

And another NEA member, Debbie Watts, chairs NCATE's Standards Committee. Its job: to develop clear, jargon-free benchmarks for accreditation.

Watts stresses that NCATE's standards—revised every five years—are "based on research, classroom experience, and the belief that *every* child deserves a highly qualified teacher."

As it stands now, only 532 out of 1,336 state-approved teacher training institutions have received NCATE accreditation. The number may be low because NCATE standards are high.

To reach these standards, many teaching institutions are beginning to address issues like:

■ **Diversity.** NCATE is looking for diversity in everything from hiring college faculty and recruiting students to instructing new teachers on how to deal with *all* kinds of students.

"To send out a new teacher without, say, experience in working with a special needs child would be devastating to that individual," says Watts, a special ed biology teacher at Berkmar High School in Lilburn, Georgia.

"We've told institutions to put a clear plan in writing to meet diversity needs—or they will be cited."

■ **Technology.** NCATE technology standards—revised in 1995—are prodding accredited institutions to teach basic computer skills, buy up-to-date technology, and make professors technology-literate. "And the more sophisticated institutions are integrating technology into their curriculum," Watts points out.

■ **Performance-based accreditation.** Increasingly, NCATE accreditation decisions will focus on the performance of institutions and candidates. More emphasis will be based on the quality of candidates' work.

Continued teacher involvement in NCATE is critical, says NEA President Bob Chase, to assure teacher quality and boost teacher professionalism.

"Working on NCATE examiner teams," Chase says, "provides NEA members with an opportunity to make direct and important contributions to building a true profession in teaching."

At presstime, Chase was urging NEA state affiliate leaders to nominate teacher members for 39 Board of Examiner slots.

Dale Fulkerson

NEA member Eloy Gonzales, a teacher at the Cliff School in New Mexico, talks with Claudia Rossman, another NEA member working on accreditation issues.

The Facts on NCATE

■ The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is a nongovernmental, nonprofit coalition of 30 national organizations representing millions of educators and the public.

■ NCATE is the only accrediting agency for teacher preparation recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

■ NCATE has accredited 532 out of 1336 state-approved teacher training institutions.

■ The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommends that states require schools of education to meet NCATE standards by 2006 or be closed.

■ The Council doesn't tell institutions how to teach or set student requirements. But it does devise tough standards designed to produce graduates ready to hit the ground running.

■ NCATE Standards Committee Chair Debbie Watts says that education graduates must possess strong communication skills, and be flexible, content-competent, comfortable in dealing with diversity, confident in dealing with parents, and ready for continued professional development.

■ NCATE standards rate teaching institutions on how they design professional education programs and by the quality of their faculty, students, and governance.

■ Unit Accreditation Board member Eloy Gonzales notes that an NCATE-accredited institution "truly believes in its mission to prepare competent teachers, is aware of current issues and trends in public education, provides state-of-the-art equipment, and goes out of its way to provide clinical/field experiences that expose education students to our ever-changing society."

■ "You can support NCATE by talking about its work," says Robert Szczepanski, an NEA Student member at Central Connecticut State University. "Word needs to get out to high school students and counselors about the value of NCATE."

For More Information

You can read NCATE accreditation standards and offer comments on proposed standard revisions—available later this year—by pointing your Web browser to www.ncate.org. For more on NCATE, contact NEA staff liaison June VanderVeen at 202/822-7661 or send E-mail to jvanderveen@nea.org.

The Bottom Line

Changing majors: The nation's elite high school grads—National Merit Scholars—start college majoring in science and math. But most soon abandon these choices. Only 24 percent of top freshmen math majors, for instance, continue in the field.

Dropouts: Of every 100 high school students in October 1995, five left school before the next October without a high school diploma. Overall, says the U.S. Department of Education, 86 percent of all 18-to-24-year-olds have now completed high school.

Web world: Nearly every college and university in the United States—97 percent—now maintains a Web site. Another 2 percent have sites under construction. The most common element on the postsecondary sites: a page devoted to admissions info.

Wired cities: Two metro areas—San Francisco and Washington, D.C.—now have more than one-quarter of all households connected to the Internet. Seattle, with 23 percent of households online, figures to be the next to pass the 25 percent threshold.

In the States

Taking Charge of the Profession

Rhode Island paraeducators help draft new state standards for their jobs.

Until last year, assault on a Rhode Island paraeducator was a mere misdemeanor. On a certified teacher, a felony.

But the status of Ocean State paras is rapidly changing. The state has recently extended them the same legal protection as certified staff, and is now adopting training standards for all paras hired as of January 1, 1999.

That moves Rhode Island into the pack of other states—from Maine to Washington (see sidebar)—that have recognized the "professionalization" of paraprofessionals.

The job most paras do—assisting certified staff and individualizing instruction—has always been integral to the teaching process. But now, with inclusion of special ed students in general ed classes and new research on learning styles, paraprofessional work has taken a spot center stage.

Like many other paras, Sandie Blankenship, who works with first graders at Stony Lane Elementary in North Kingstown, Rhode Island, has seen her responsibilities snowball.

Eight years ago, Blankenship worked in the copy room and monitored in-school suspension.

Today, she works with regular ed students who are languishing, while focusing on two special needs students in a mainstream setting.

Blankenship, president of the 86-member North Kingstown Association of Paraprofessionals, says her job now requires skills in areas like classroom management, crisis intervention, discipline techniques, and instructional reinforcement for all learning styles.

"Now I'm an extra pair of eyes, ears, and hands for the certified teacher, part of the total support system," Blankenship stresses. "Now other educators come to me to get my observations of students I work with."

Blankenship put her experience to work last year, helping NEA Rhode Island lobby to reshape a proposed teaching assistant standards bill from "something overly prescriptive" to legislation paras could build on.

Kris Craig

Rhode Island paraeducator Sandie Blankenship has seen her responsibilities snowball in recent years. Will professional treatment and training for paras snowball, too?

Signed into law last summer, the legislation recognizes skills gained by experienced paras and authorizes a task force—including NEA and AFT paras and college education professors—to draft training standards for new teaching assistants.

Blankenship, who serves on the panel, says the final task force report acknowledges that paras are "integral members of the instructional team" and notes that the proposed standards are based on the notion that "Teaching Assistant is a profession and an important career."

Among other things, the draft standards, now under review by the state Board of Regents, would require all new paras to:

- Demonstrate proficiency in communications and collaboration with others in the school community.
- Support teachers by participating in instructional opportunities and actively helping students engage in "learning and self-monitoring."
- Know proper health, safety, and emergency procedures.

For Blankenship, these para guidelines all boil down to gaining respect as team members from classroom colleagues. "We just want to be valued," she says.

"Too often," says Anna Lou Pickett, of the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, "school districts employ paraeducators as important members of the instructional team—without saying it out loud."

That, says NEA Rhode Island staffer Gail Colburn, must change.

"The biggest problem has been the lack of status for paras," Colburn adds. "Administrators from the top down have to understand that paraeducators provide valuable, critical services, and paras need to think of themselves in a professional manner."

For More Information

Contact Sandie Blankenship at 401/294-4363. For more on the status, needs, and training of paraeducators, call national expert Anna Lou Pickett at 212/642-2948 or send a Fax to 212/719-2488.

Para Parallels

Look beyond Rhode Island for broad trends in state paraeducator standards, and you'll just wind up at a buffet table. Here's a sampling of the choices:

- **Maine** has formal para certification for three experience- and training-based levels of "educational technicians"—including library and computer aides.

The law requires districts to provide in-service training to paras, "but we're finding as we go along that we need new legislation to improve the training provision—and to get districts to follow the ed tech regulations," says UniServ Director Joan Morin *(800/452-8709)*.

- **Kansas** requires permits for three levels of special ed paraprofessionals. Adds Kansas NEA staffer Peg Dunlap *(PegDunlap@HQ@KSEA)*: "State regulations require each school district to have a plan for paras and to provide each special ed instructional para with not less than 20 clock hours of in-service training a year."
- **Utah** has developed guidelines for para training and supervision.
- **Minnesota** is working on para training standards, while **Iowa's** draft guidelines on para employment and training are imminent.
- **Washington State** does not yet have paraeducator regulations, but the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has approved an advisory group's 14 "core competencies" for working with students with disabilities—everything from awareness of diversity to knowledge of the law.

***More* From Washington. . .**

Teachers across Washington State are bringing home bigger paychecks because the Washington Education Association found errors in salary calculations. In Bremerton alone, teachers were underpaid more than $125,000 in the past school year.

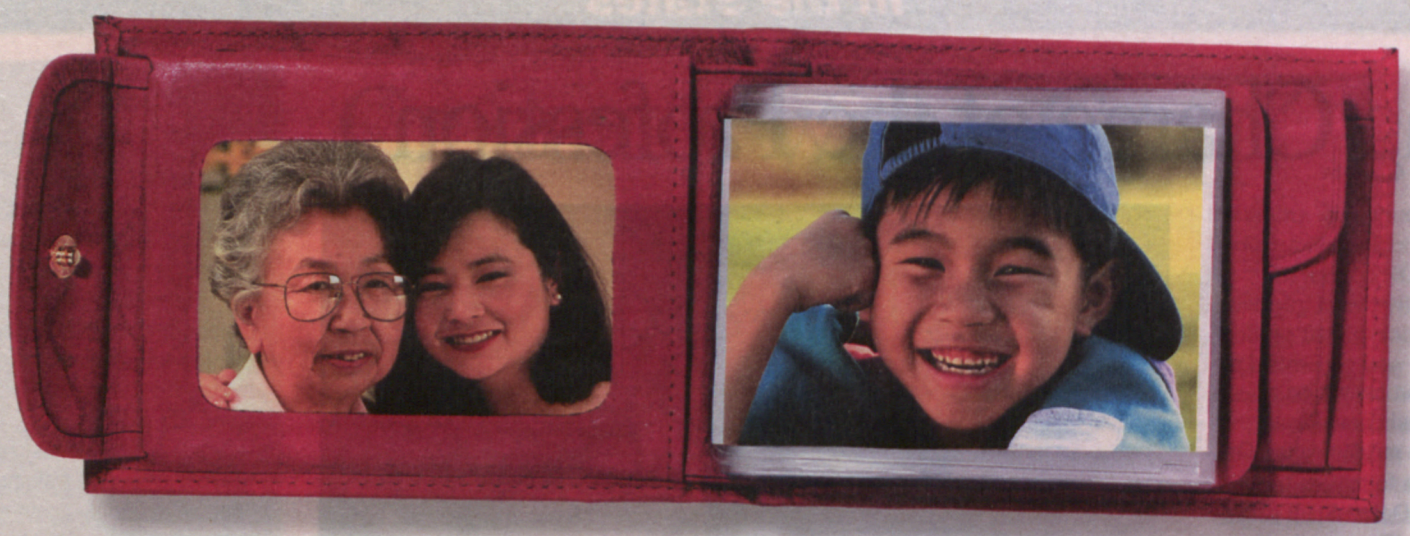
"This is an unfolding investigation," promises WEA's Joann Kink Mertens. "It's really like ringing a cash register, where the benefits for members will keep adding up."

Benefits: Private sector employers are cutting back benefits, notes the Economic Policy Institute. Companies in 1977 spent 84 cents per hour worked on retirement, but only 53 cents in 1996. Also down: the percentage of full-time workers receiving health benefits.

Charters: Private, for-profit firms are now operating an estimated 10 percent of the nation's 700-plus charter schools. None of the dozen private companies running charters have yet reported actually making a profit from their school operations.

Free speech: A new Freedom Forum poll reports that 93 percent of Americans would vote for the First Amendment if they had the chance. But 38 percent of the public believes the press in the United States has too much freedom.

Global AIDS: The number of people infected by HIV, the AIDS virus, is increasing faster than researchers first estimated, says the World Health Organization. The world is now averaging 16,000 new cases a day, and that figure is rising 9 percent a year.



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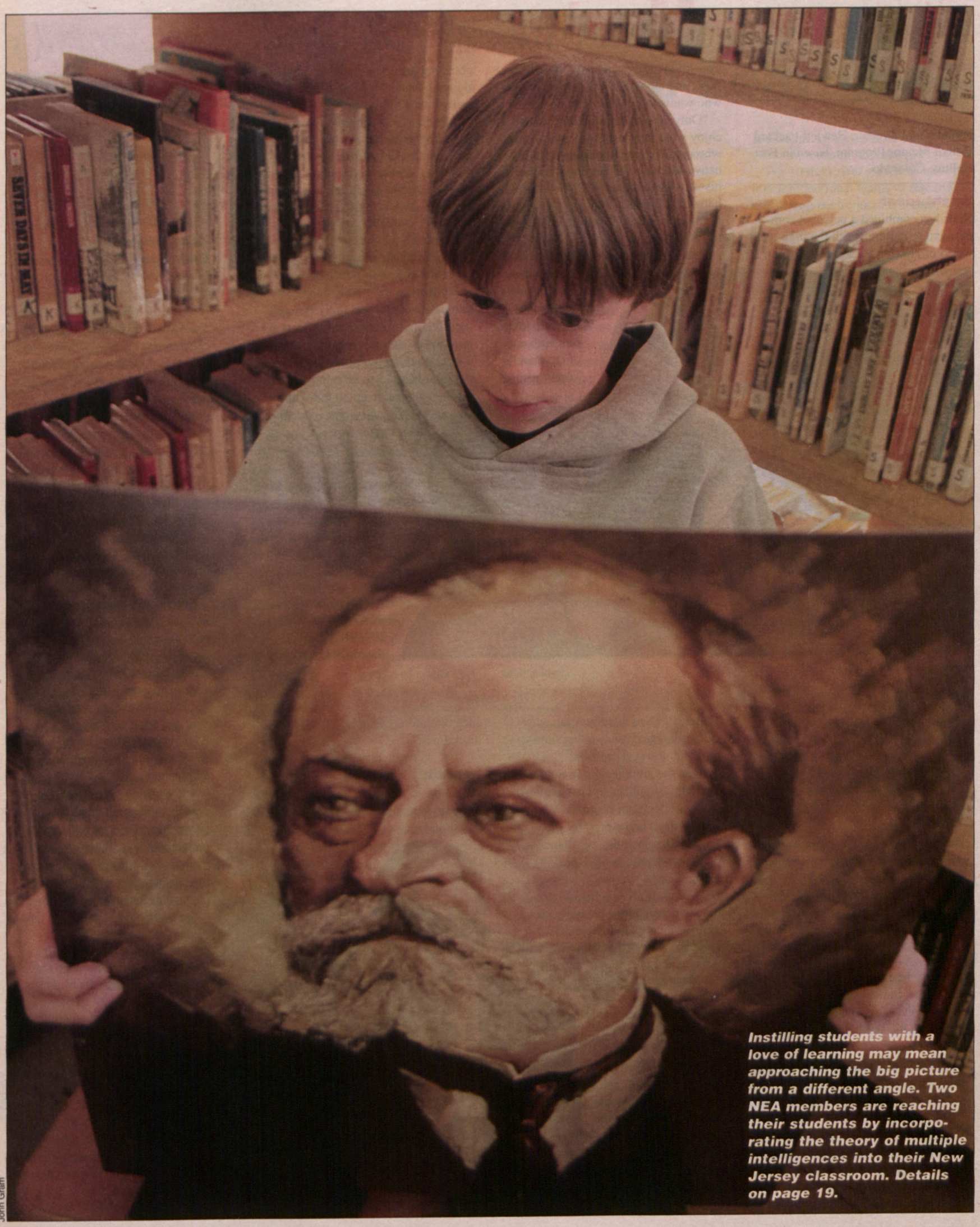


John Gram

Instilling students with a love of learning may mean approaching the big picture from a different angle. Two NEA members are reaching their students by incorporating the theory of multiple intelligences into their New Jersey classroom. Details on page 19.

Innovators

Clicking with a Mentor

Innovator:
David Neils

Job:
Founder and director, Hewlett Packard E-mail Mentor Program, based in Fort Collins, Colorado

Bright Idea:
Neils has combined a personal commitment to children with the high-tech world of Hewlett Packard to develop a "telementoring" program that pairs 1,600 company staff with hundreds of students through E-mail.

"In our program, we talk to students—ask what they enjoy doing, zero in on possible future jobs," says Neils. "Then we hook them up with mentors who truly love their work and are willing to help someone who wants to do what they do.

"Only 20 percent of people actually enjoy what they're doing," says Neils, who credits a neighbor/mentor in his native Montana for helping him find his way professionally. "We should help kids find jobs they enjoy—because then they'll end up doing better work."

One Alaska student, stuck on what course of study to pursue, noted a side interest in photography. Neils connected him with one of the world's finest nature photographers. The student is now studying photography in college—with Neils still as his mentor.

All schools are eligible to participate in the program, as long as they incorporate the program into their math and science curriculum, participate for the entire school year, maintain an E-mail account, and participate in annual evaluation surveys.

Although the program's primary targets are math and science students, other students aren't excluded.

Students in the fifth through 12th grades are eligible to apply through their school. If accepted, students are required to commit two to three hours a week to the program. Mentors must put in at least 15 to 30 minutes each week; teachers, from 30 to 60 minutes; and school contacts, more than three hours.

Impact:
Many students' grades have improved, Neils reports. During a school visit, students told him, "We're more excited about school now."

For More:
Contact Neils at 970/898-4742, Fax 970/204-3947, E-mail: davidneils@hp.com.

Strong Words

Who:
Harold Chu

Job:
Director, Center for Bilingual/Multicultural/ESL Education, Graduate School of Education, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

Bright Idea:
Each year, the demand for English-as-a-second-language teachers grows. In the Washington metropolitan area alone, where Chu works, his recent survey showed students speak 80 different native languages.

How to meet the shifting "linguistic demographics"? Demand more rigorous training for ESL teachers, says Chu.

At George Mason, Chu has implemented a curriculum that far exceeds most state licensing requirements. The curriculum integrates language studies, content area studies, and multicultural perspectives.

Even the entrance requirements are tough. Applicants must demonstrate academic or professional achievement and a mastery of English that includes excellence in reading, writing, public speaking, grammar, and syntax.

They must also be fluent in one of the languages in the Center's program, which include Spanish, Russian, Korean, Vietnamese, Urdu, Arabic, and Farsi.

"Meaningful instruction for a student whose native language is, say, Arabic will not happen if the ESL teacher teaches only English," says Chu.

"The teacher needs to help the student see the goal of proficiency in English as a means to an end," he adds, "as the pathway to learning math, science, literature, history, art—all the disciplines."

Impact:
As the prestige of Chu's demanding program spreads, his emphasis on the importance of ESL teaching continues to gain prominence.

Paul Taredo

For More:
Contact Chu at 703/993-3688 or E-mail hchu@gmu.edu.

Embracing the Unknown

"An Unconditional Embrace," Teaching Tolerance, *Spring 1998. Education activist William Ayers, the author most recently of* A Kind and Just Parent: The Children of Juvenile Court *(Beacon Press, $22), answers the question, "What particular challenges face white teachers who teach students from racial and ethnic minorities?"*

"When a white teacher encounters a 12-year-old African American child in her class, what does she know?

She doesn't automatically know what the kid's life is like, what food the kid prefers, what music the kid likes or what faith informs their home.

She might assume that the kid knows things about growing up among people who have survived racial injustice, and that the kid's family is more expert than she is on their experiences. But even those assumptions should remain contingent and filled with doubt.

The teacher should encounter the child—every child—with humanity and a little awe.

The challenge is to take enough into account about children's differences, histories, and preferences to understand and appreciate and know them well—while refusing to make uninformed generalizations or simplistic conclusions about them.

Teachers have to create an environment that's broad enough, diverse enough, dense enough for children to find out who they are within a multiplicity of possibilities.

Only in that kind of environment can we help children learn to make constructive choices—in freedom, but also in community. . . .

[We] have to make a commitment based on faith that all human beings have capacities and abilities that are not always visible. The most fundamental job as a teacher is to find the unlimited potential that you assume every child has."

Classroom Leader for **Certification**

In 1993, North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt asked Karen Garr to serve as the first Teacher Adviser to the Governor. Garr, then an elementary school teacher and former president of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), has used her office to help build one of the nation's most successful programs supporting teacher certification.

Wow us with the numbers.
Out of fewer than 1,000 certificates awarded to date by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 207 have gone to North Carolina teachers.

Right now, 875 of the 2,200 candidates for national certification are North Carolinians.

What's made North Carolina so successful?
In 1994, North Carolina became the first state to pay an upfront fee to all teachers who complete the National Board program. The fee—$2,000—goes to all teachers who complete the course of study, not just those who attain a national certificate.

Teachers who do attain their certificate also receive a 12 percent salary increase on top of any increase on the current salary schedule.

Also, North Carolina recognizes National Board certification in lieu of all other state requirements. That's a way of saying to all nationally certified teachers, "Come to North Carolina, where excellence in teaching is recognized!"

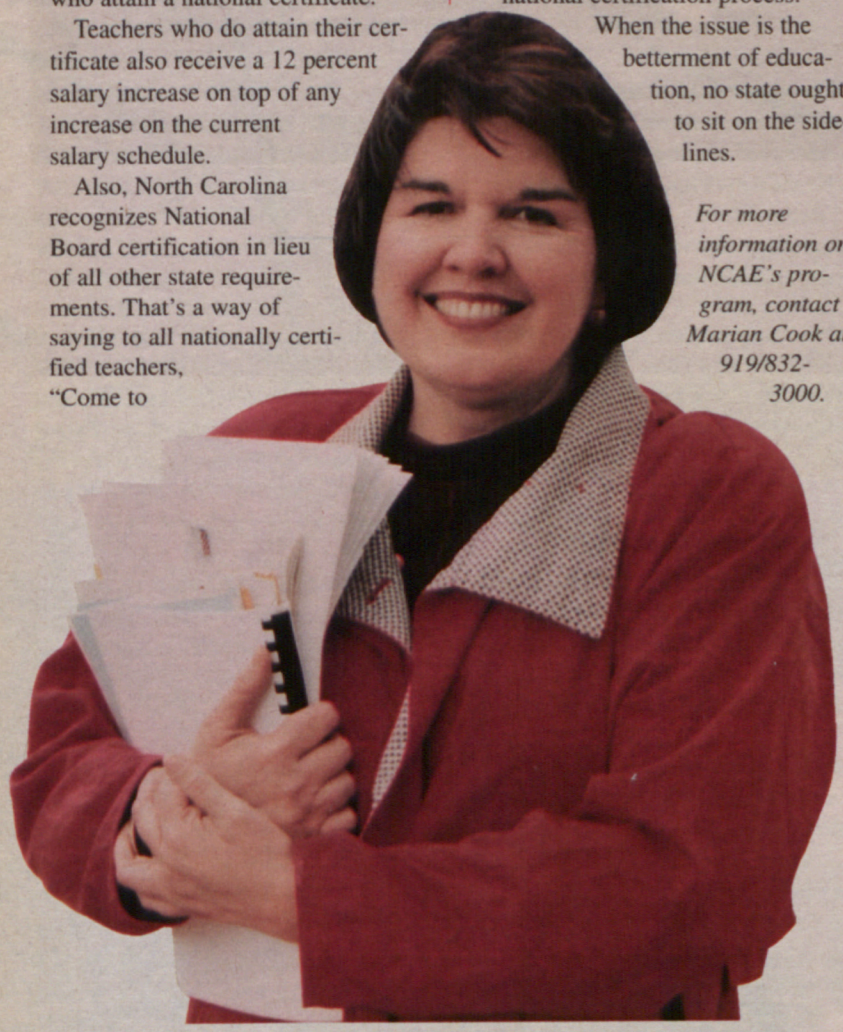
What has NCAE's role been?
The Association provides informational workshops and follow-up sessions. It distributes a monthly newsletter with up-to-date information on national certification.

And NCAE staff carried the ball in the legislature. They put their all behind the governor's initiative—and put the Association on record in favor of better teaching and more rigorous professional development.

Are other states following your lead?
We're gratified that other states—Ohio, for example—are looking to North Carolina in developing their national certification programs. The governor wants a national commitment to national certification—and believes other state Associations should follow NCAE's lead.

NEA affiliates in other states should rally for programs that would get more teachers involved in the national certification process. When the issue is the betterment of education, no state ought to sit on the sidelines.

For more information on NCAE's program, contact Marian Cook at 919/832-3000.



Kristine Dittmer

Warming to **Global Learning**

Innovators:
Molly Kellar and Andrew Goldstein

Job:
Teachers, South Salem High School, Oregon

Bright Idea:
Global cooperation has come to the classroom.

Through the 21st Century Schoolhouse, students in six schools around the world collaborate through the Internet to address common problems they face in their communities.

At South Salem, the global connection is made in a course that Kellar and Goldstein team teach called Environmental Issues, a topic their international counterparts examine in their own countries.

"Too often, educators teach subjects as separate entities—when, in fact, the opposite is true in real life," says Kellar. So her course is an amalgam of economics, science, government, and technology.

Three years ago, Kellar and Goldstein used the Internet to find schools in other countries that were interested in forming an international partnership. An airline then sponsored their trek to five foreign schools, and the partnerships for the 21st Century Schoolhouse were sealed.

Students communicate mainly through the Internet on environmental issues in their communities. Last September, some had a chance to meet in person, as student representatives from Australia, Brazil, Israel, Japan, and South Africa came to Salem for a summit on the environment.

For 10 days, 100 students organized into multinational teams to research and debate environmental issues, from energy resources to toxic waste.

The students developed a Declaration of Environmental Rights and Responsibilities, which they're now presenting to governments and the United Nations.

Noted one newspaper: "If this cooperative learning and international attention to global issues can be replicated by other schools, then our future is in good hands."

Impact:
The 21st Century Schoolhouse has attracted the support of education, business, and government leaders—including Al Gore and Nelson Mandela. The next summit will be held in Perth, Australia from September 28 to October 7, 1999.

For more:
Contact the 21st Century Schoolhouse at 503/603-9133, Fax: 503/603-1871, E-mail: schoolhs@worldstar.com. Or visit the Web at www.viser.net/gs21.

More Than **Small Classes**

Classes of 15 or fewer hold great benefits for children in the primary grades (see "Inside Scoop," page 17). But research shows that even in ideal-sized classrooms, top-notch learning environments require:

- Educators who provide immediate feedback, monitoring, pre-planned instruction, and strong organization.
- Educators who have a sense of humor, love children, and who can communicate well with parents.
- A class environment that includes assertive discipline, high expectations, peer tutoring, and reteaching.
- Effective classroom practices that include creative writing, learning centers, and use of manipulatives.

Source: Helen Pate-Bain, Student/Teacher Ratio Project (1997), 213 Cumberland Dr., Lebanon, TN 37087.

This may be
the land of plenty, but
there's something
Americans, especially
teenagers, aren't getting
enough of – calcium.
This could lead to
osteoporosis. So what's
the best way to
load up on calcium?
Drink lowfat or
fat free milk. We always
keep a full thermos
in the cabinet.
MILK
Where's *your* mustache?℠
For contest information on how to win free computers for
your school, call 1-888-MILK-WINS by February 20, 1998.
DONNA SHALALA ©1998 NATIONAL FLUID MILK PROCESSOR PROMOTION BOARD

Inside Scoop

Small Classes Hold Long-Term Benefits

Researchers have shown that small class sizes in the primary grades can boost student learning in those grades. A new study shows that small classes in elementary school produce long-term benefits, too—students are more accomplished even when they hit high school.

Background, please.

The Student/Teacher Ratio (STAR) Project studied more than 3,000 K-3 students in selected rural, suburban, urban, and inner-city Tennessee schools from 1985-89. In this $12 million study, led by Dr. Helen Pate-Bain, NEA president from 1970-71, students were randomly assigned to classes labeled small (13-17), regular (22-25), or regular with a full-time aide.

The STAR Project revealed that students in small classes consistently scored higher on achievement and basic skills tests. And inner-city, predominately minority children in small classes outscored their counterparts in both kinds of regular classes.

So what's the latest news on the research front?

The newest data show that STAR Project students who were in small classes during the early grades continue to reap benefits even today, as they move into larger classes in high school.

Funded by grants from NEA and American Federation of Teachers, Pate-Bain and her colleagues combed through records of 10th graders today who had participated in the original STAR project.

Among the findings:

- The percentage of small-class students who'd been held back before grade 10 was half that of their counterparts in the regular groups—17 percent versus 30 to 44 percent. That's a strong predictor that small-class students are less likely to drop out of high school.
- Those from small primary grade classes outscored the others in high school English, math, and science by more than 10 points.
- Students in the small-class group had taken significantly more advanced courses, such as algebra II, calculus, advanced placement English, and foreign languages—indicating they are more apt to be college-bound.
- The small-class group had consistently fewer suspension days as high schoolers.
- This same group consistently had fewer absences than the others as they moved through high school.

Are teachers from the STAR Project surprised at these outcomes?

"No—I'd expect that these children would be more academically grounded," says Karen Sellars, a 27-year teaching veteran at Nashville's Cole Elementary whose third grade class participated in the study in 1988.

"We were able to get to know the children so much better," Sellars recalls. "I could check student progress almost immediately and give immediate feedback. The children had a wide variety of abilities, but we were able to cover much more material.

"We were encouraged to make home visits," Sellars adds. "That created a real community feeling among the parents, teachers, and students."

Sellars's classroom is now filled with 26 third graders, and she's nearing retirement. But she's determined to stay until the 1999-2000 school year, when state reform efforts will set a cap of 20 in her grade level.

"That might add five to 10 years to my teaching career," she laughs.

How close are we to getting smaller classes for everyone?

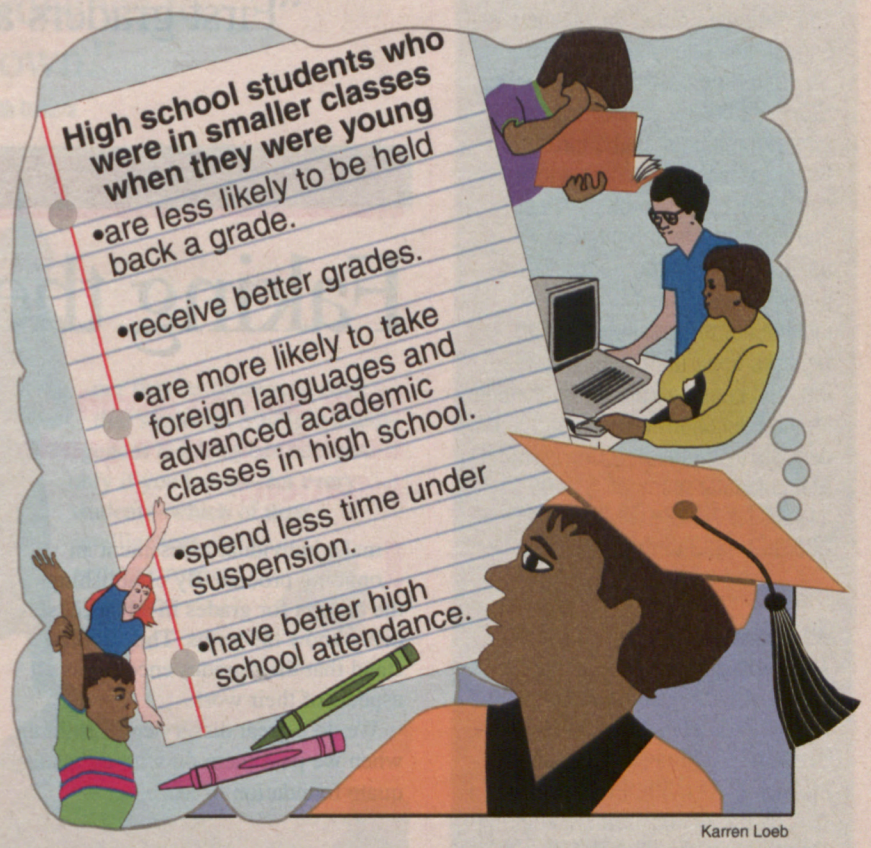
The powers that hold the purse strings may be getting the message. At least 27 states have begun the big push—from California's much-publicized $1 billion move to cap elementary classes at 20 to efforts in Alabama and Tennessee to phase in class sizes of 18 to 20.

The federal government is also getting in the act, with President Clinton proposing funding for 100,000 new teachers and new school construction in his recent budget.

Any downside to smaller classes?

Not to smaller classes themselves. But making them a reality "calls for lots of planning," says Pate-Bain. "You don't just walk in and suddenly reduce all K-3 classes to 15 students. Do it one year at a time."

Space is an issue—smaller classes mean that districts will need more classrooms. Charles Achilles, professor of educational leadership at Eastern Michigan University, urges school systems to look for space in their communities that could be linked to school buildings by technology.


High school students who were in smaller classes when they were young
•are less likely to be held back a grade.
•receive better grades.
•are more likely to take foreign languages and advanced academic classes in high school.
•spend less time under suspension.
•have better high school attendance.

Karren Loeb

Smaller classes also call for more teachers and support staff—trained, caring staff, if we're to get the most from small classes, notes Pate-Bain.

"We need a push on all fronts to bring more young people into education," she says. "Many teachers were inspired to enter the profession by their own teachers. Teachers now have to accept the responsibility for doing the same."

The irony, notes Pate-Bain, is that many teachers today are too "burned out" by unmanageable, large class sizes to be very inspiring.

Is 'class size' the same as 'pupil-teacher ratio'?

No, says Achilles. Many pull-out programs with small groups drive down the overall pupil-teacher ratio at a school. But this, in turn, may lead to an increase in the size of the classes where the majority of children spend most of their day.

What's NEA's stand?

The Association supports an optimum class size of 15 students in regular programs and a proportionately lower number in programs for students with exceptional needs.

NEA also believes that class size maximums must be established, based on criteria that include type of students, subject area content, and physical facilities.

What's ahead?

Pate-Bain hopes to do another follow-up study that would examine whether small class size in early grades contributes to making better citizens.

She'd like to see if the original STAR students, one year after graduation, are registered to vote, do volunteer work, and otherwise contribute to their communities.

"No one can say class size doesn't make a difference," says Pate-Bain. "But money always runs the show. If we can show that small class size will keep people out of prison and off welfare, legislatures will listen.

"You either pay up front or you pay down the road."

Need More Information?

- To find out more about Project STAR results, contact Helen Pate-Bain at HEROS, Inc., 213 Cumberland Dr., Lebanon, TN 37087. Send E-mail to heros@telalink.net. Results are also available on the Web at www.askeric.org.
- Charles Achilles, Jeremy Finn, and Helen Pate-Bain discuss "Using Class Size To Reduce the Equity Gap" in *Educational Leadership*, December 1997-January 1998, $9. You can Fax your order request to 703/299-8631.

Students &

Good Stuff

Reading Stephen King
The National Council of Teachers of English has published *Reading Stephen King: Issues of Censorship, Student Choice, and Popular Literature*, a book that addresses the hot topics in teaching adolescent readers: censorship, values, and the benefits and pitfalls of using popular literature to get students to read. The 17 chapters include author Stephen King's remarks on writing, teaching, reading, and censorship. Editors include Maine Education Association member Jeffrey Wilhelm, a University of Maine faculty member. $19.95/$14.95 for NCTE members. Call 800/369-6283 to order.

Read All About It
NewsKids—Learning Hot Off the Press explains how educators in grades 4-8 can use newspapers as a teaching tool for reading comprehension, grammar, writing, social studies, even math. Produced in part by the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, the kit includes two videos—one for students, one for educators—and a 32-page workbook that includes activities and lesson plans. $49.95 from Optical Data School Media. Call 800/201-7103 to order.

Children's Choices
Some 10,000 school children across the country have voted on their favorite books of 1997 in categories from beginning to advanced readers. The Children's Choices list, which includes tips for educators, is available by sending $1 and a self-addressed 9" by 12" envelope to the International Reading Association, Dept. EG, P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714. The list is also available on the Children's Book Council Web site (www.cbcbooks.org), where you'll also find information on how to participate in next year's selection process.

Exceptional Site
Find the latest on special education issues and legislation, scholarships, and awards for students with special needs at the Council for Exceptional Children's Web site (www.cec.sped.org). You'll also find information on professional development events, professional standards for special educators, and highlights of upcoming journal articles.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"First graders are asking, 'Is is time for lunch yet?'—and it's only 9:30!"

Diana Behnke, first grade teacher, Normal, Illinois

Dilemma

Faking the Grade?

How do you avoid contributing to grade inflation?

I make individual assessment an ongoing process. By establishing the criteria for grades in advance, students know the terms. They understand that their grades encompass all aspects of their work.

We do a great disservice to children when we pass them on with an inadequate foundation of learning.

Mary Thompson
Sixth grade teacher
Cumberland, Maryland

In the fall of 1994, after first quarter grades had been issued, parents of a few Algebra I students at a high school here complained to the math department supervisor.

Though not failures, the grades were not as high as their children had earned in middle school. Parents felt the teacher—a 20-year veteran who's consistently produced some of the best results on the calculus AP exam in the district—was the problem.

Two parents became adamant. They contacted other parents, met with the principal, and demanded that the grades be altered.

The problem came to the attention of the district superintendent. All three algebra teachers were instructed to slow down the pace of the course and leave out some topics. The administration discussed plans to ignore district policy and adjust the grades given by all three teachers.

The Freehold Regional High School Education Association stepped in to protect the professionalism of the teachers. The superintendent tried to justify altering the grades by stating that it would affect college admissions. The Association responded that it wasn't the grades that would harm the students, it was the lack of knowledge of mathematics.

A compromise was supposedly reached. The teachers would have the final decision. And at the end of the year, they were to decide on a case-by-case basis if the district policy produced a grade that accurately reflected the students' ability. This was done in good faith, and some grades were changed in favor of the student.

Parents continued to complain—they wanted more students' grades changed *and* second alterations made to grades that had been adjusted.

It was spring of the following year before the three algebra teachers had their grade books returned to them. The full extent of the wholesale inflation of grades by the administration became apparent.

The grades of almost all of the 170 students had been altered.

In spite of this incident, teachers in our district continue in their efforts to maintain high standards of achievement and assign grades appropriate to the work produced.

Jacqueline Behson
High school teacher (retired)
Freehold, New Jersey

I take a performance-based assessment approach. I weight grades so that tests and quizzes are worth 50 percent of the final grade. I administer many tests orally either one-on-one with the students or in small groups. I grade strictly, but I give students the option to re-test to improve their performance and grades.

I've made it harder for students to get straight *A*s by weighing the test category highly. As a result, some students don't re-enroll in German. They opt for another course in which they "know" they can get an *A*. These courses exist in every school, and so do teachers who will pad grades to keep students—and their parents—happy and maintain high enrollments.

Dave Miller
High school German teacher
Laramie, Wyoming

I stick to the standard—if students get *D*s or *F*s, that's it. I refuse to bend so that fewer students get those

grades. I don't need to do that to give my ego a lift.

Kenneth Zahora
Fourth grade teacher
Indianapolis, Indiana

I state clear, fair expectations and hold students to them. It's unfair to give students grades that exaggerate accomplishments. A teacher can tell students that they're valuable without giving them undeserved credit.

Gary Harmon
High school French teacher
Knoxville Tennessee

Got an Answer?

How do you prove to the public that your students are learning?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org.**

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Students develop alternative approaches to solving a problem—on their own."

Dan Vainonen, high school social studies teacher, Jamestown, North Dakota

Delight

Hot on Multiple Intelligences

Transforming an abstract theory into classroom practice sparks learning among first graders.

"The question that guides us is not 'How smart are you?' but 'How are you smart?'" says Darlene Eger, a first grade teacher at Barber Elementary School in Phillipsburg, New Jersey.

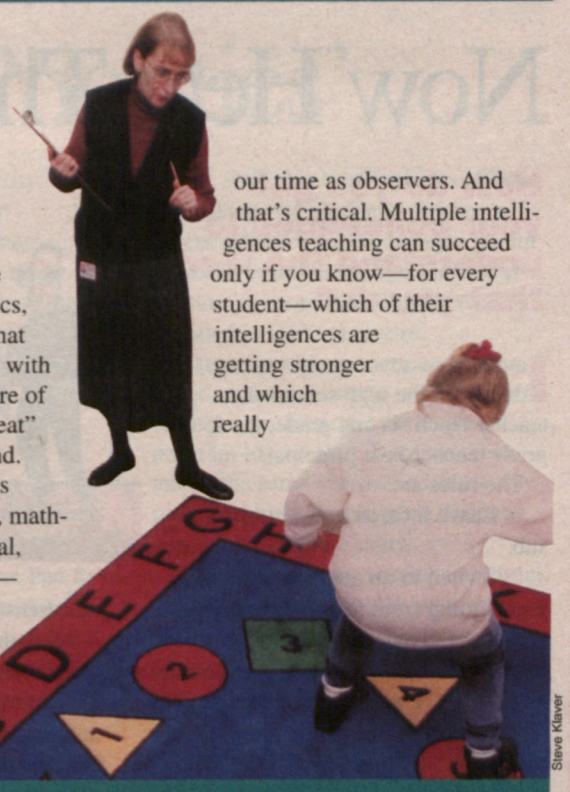
"We start from the heart of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences—the tenet that all students are intelligent, but intelligent in different ways," Eger explains.

Eger team teaches with Diane Keenan. Together, they have put the theory of multiple intelligences into classroom practice, as part of an innovative partnership between their school district and Gardner's Project Zero team at Harvard University.

A "typical" math lesson in Eger and Keenan's class might require students to listen to song lyrics, count the number of words that rhyme, play a rhyming game with each other, then draw a picture of something that one of the "neat" rhyming words brings to mind.

With that, five of Gardner's eight intelligences—musical, mathematical-logical, interpersonal, linguistic, and visual-spatial—are bundled together in a single lesson.

Eger and Keenan adapted Gardner's multiple intelligences lingo into terms their first graders understand. A child with linguistic intelligence is "word smart"; visual intelligence is "art smart"; interpersonal intelligence is "we smart"; intrapersonal intelligence is "me smart."



Steve Klaver

There are many ways to teach that 5+1=6, as New Jersey teacher Diane Keenan shows.

Eger and Keenan make sure that every lesson is rigorously multidisciplinary. And classroom activities flow from constant assessment.

"This makes it possible for us to help students use their strongest intelligences to strengthen their weakest intelligences," says Keenan.

If Tasha, for example, is art smart but struggling with numbers, Eger and Keenan will use art activities to help her with math. Or they might rely on we smarts, suggesting that Tasha talk to Alex, who is very number smart but thinks he'll never be art smart.

"We rely on our reading specialist, our teacher aide, and our parent volunteers," says Eger. "Because of all they do, Diane and I get to spend a big part of our time as observers. And that's critical. Multiple intelligences teaching can succeed only if you know—for every student—which of their intelligences are getting stronger and which really need strengthening."

Steve Klaver

Multiple intelligences teaching balances students' strengths against their weaknesses, notes Darlene Eger.

Students participate in self-evaluations—at any time, a child may move a marker on a wall chart to indicate what kind of "smarts" he or she has.

"It's a terrific feeling," says Keenan, "when a student who has seen herself exclusively as art smart or music smart suddenly gets up one day and moves her marker to a place that shows she believes she's really word smart."

Eger and Keenan's partnership with Harvard began three years ago. They started by building a highly successful after-school enrichment program based on the multiple intelligences theory, then expanded to build their current program.

Results? Barber's second grade teachers—who incorporate multiple intelligences theory into their own teaching—report that the "graduates" from Eger and Keenan's class are eager to learn, uncommonly cooperative, and extremely adaptable.

For More Information

Contact Barber Elementary School at 908/213-2560.

Idea Exchange

Round Table Cooperation

One of the ways that I've balanced cooperation and competition in my eighth grade math class has been to take Spencer Kagan's cooperative "Round Table" idea and add a competitive touch to it.

The day before a major exam, I have each student write his or her name on a review sheet, complete the first question on that sheet, and then pass the sheet clockwise.

Students then review the new sheet in front of them. If they agree with that response, they go on to do the next question on that sheet. If they disagree, they stop the entire group, discuss, and come to consensus.

By the time the assignment is completed, each student has written on each paper several times, and the name at the top no longer reflects only one individual's work.

I then shuffle the papers within a group and randomly choose one sheet. That paper is given to another group to grade.

The group whose chosen paper contains the fewest errors is the winner!

At the outset, it's usually the competitive aspect that motivates the students to stop and confer about a teammate's problem. But eventually they forget the competitive element and enjoy "Round Table" as a novel way to review before a test . . . with a cooperative attitude permeating the room.

Judy Freier
Greenwich, Connecticut

Want More?

Have a great idea? Pass along your tips to *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7201, or E-mail: ideas@neatoday.nea.org.

For more tips, check out NEA's weekly E-mail service, Works4Me. To sign up, send an E-mail to lyris@list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Professional

Good Stuff

Board Certification
A recent issue of *The Profession Builder*, published by NEA's National Center for Innovation, includes a fact sheet and state-specific information on National Board certification. For a free copy, contact NEA National Center for Innovation, Attn: Letty Calleja, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7372, E-mail: LCalleja@nea.org. To contact the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, write to 26555 Evergreen, Suite 400, Southfield, MI 48076, call 800/22TEACH, or visit the Web at www.nbpts.org.

Taking Charge
In *Taking Charge of Quality: How Teachers and Their Unions Can Revitalize Schools*, authors Charles Taylor Kerchner, Julia Koppich, and Joseph Weeres offer a solid blueprint for improving teaching and learning, setting higher standards, and taking charge of the profession through peer review. This 56-page publication, a companion work to the educational reform book *United Mind Workers*, is $6.95 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library. Call 800/229-4200 to order, stock #2168-1-00-FG.

Dollars for Training
Investing in Teacher Professional Development examines how much states and districts are spending on training and what kind of training produces the best results. The report also discusses options for the future—noting, for example, that many educators think that technology could be a useful professional development tool, even as most technology dollars go directly for student use. $9.50 from the Education Commission of the States Distribution Center, 707 17th St., Suite 2700, Denver, CO 80202-3427, 303/299-3692.

Ask a Question
AskLN, an online service for educators interested in using the Internet and other technologies, will answer any question on integrating technology into the classroom or the practice of education. Fill out the form on the Web at ericir.syr.edu/AskLN/ or send an E-mail to AskLN@ericir.syr.edu with your name, E-mail address, phone number, school name, school mailing address—and your question.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"The educational staff is divided on which approach is most suitable for the students."

Dorothy Ryan, middle school secretary, Lower Burrell, Pennsylvania

Dilemma

Now Hear This!

How do you get your colleagues to understand the work that you do?

Ted Pitts

I am a huge advocate of "mix-up" days. Let the high school shop teacher teach second grade, the fourth grade teacher be a principal.

The rules are:

- Leave info, as you would for a sub.
- Switch to an area unknown to you—going from fourth to fifth grade doesn't really show you a lot.

This should involve as many people as possible. I was involved in a project like this in another district, and it really does open people's eyes.

Barbara O'Brien
Title I reading improvement teacher
Brighton, Illinois

I am a paraprofessional in a special school program for mentally and physically challenged children. It's very hard for my colleagues to understand that much of the job for paras like myself is physical, rather than academically oriented.

So I invite others to observe our program or read our job description to understand our busy schedules.

Some of my students must be lifted and positioned in adaptive equipment such as standers, walkers, and beds. They need help with their eating and personal needs.

This is in addition to my other duties, such as copying, filing, and assisting with vocational, physical, and community training to meet students' individual education program objectives.

Gail Uncapher
High school paraprofessional
Wilmington, Delaware

I am an academic language therapist who works with students with language learning difficulties like dyslexia. Recently, I asked to have a school-wide in-service day on language learning problems to show how my multisensory program works.

After the program, teachers raved. They seemed to better understand the characteristics of special ed students and how to work with and for them. Teachers also seemed more willing to ask questions about special ed students and discuss plans for them.

The program helped teachers make more accurate recommendations of students needing special services. And students, in turn, have become more successful.

I also have encouraged colleagues to visit my classroom to observe. Unfortunately, only one has done so.

Monica Johnson-Parkhill
Academic language therapist
Lindsay, Texas

There's no simple answer to this question, as school districts employ a variety of health personnel and call them all "school nurses."

As a certificated school nurse, with a BS and a master's degree and ESA certification, the scope of my job is much broader than a staff person who is considered a "health aide."

To help teachers understand my role, I work with them to develop the best academic program for each student. I contact each teacher when a student is on medication, has treatments at school, or any health concern that might impact learning.

At staff meetings, I give an update on what's gone on in the clinic. I also explain any emergency measures that may be needed for specific students with serious health concerns.

If there's a community health concern, I may provide information that could benefit the staff's own health and safety.

Even so, some staff still see me only as a "band-aid." Certainly, first aid and comfort to an injured student are part of my job—but only a very small part.

Mary Kathryn Myers
School nurse
Kent, Washington

I publish a classroom newsletter that discusses our vision, planning, implementation, and accomplishments. I recap the same things in the school newsletter. I do interactive bulletin board displays that incorporate the learning principles involved. I collaborate with other professionals and publish in local, state, regional, and international newsletters and journals. I do lesson planning with a group of colleagues and frequently do staff development.

Debbie Coonrod
First grade teacher
Fort Worth, Texas

Got an Answer?

How do you get quality feedback when the principal doesn't give it to you?
Send your answer to *NEA Today* through regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at **dilemma2@neatoday.org.**

Growth

You know you've been successful when . . .

"All of the teachers turn in their finals masters to be duplicated at least two days before the scheduled test."

Joyce Harrington, high school paraprofessional, Canton, Michigan

Delight

'We Defined the Priorities'

Virginia teachers take charge of their training and develop courses that heed the realities of the classroom.

"We weren't trying to save the world," recalls veteran teacher Sandra Moore. "We weren't trying to reach all the at-risk kids in the universe.

"No, the at-risk students at Carver Elementary—those were the students we had to find a way to help," says Moore.

To do that, the staff at George Washington Carver Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia, decided to take control of their own professional development.

"We defined the priorities," says second grade teacher Zenoria Abdus-Salaam. "We were determined to build a program based on our own understanding of our students' strengths and weaknesses."

With a $15,000 Student Success grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, educators at Carver initiated a tightly targeted needs assessment aimed at developing a detailed list of the skills expected of students at each grade level.

From this list, the staff—teachers, support staff, administrators—created a professional development agenda.

During 1996-97, the first year of Carver's training program, course offerings focused on technology, math, and science, with special emphasis on hands-on activities that would bring science alive for students.

The staff invited distinguished scholars to teach the subjects they felt would help them the most. Professors from Virginia State University, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Commonwealth University delivered semester-long courses at Carver.

"We became a mini-university," says Principal Loretha Taylor.

Carver staffers continued their proactive stance at this stage, directing the professors to develop lessons that addressed the daily realities of the elementary school classroom. And they insisted on ideas that they could take back to their classrooms and try out immediately.

The results were dramatic: A science fair that a year earlier drew fewer than 20 entries drew more than 110.

"From the start, we knew we had to capitalize on our in-house expertise," says Evette Wilson, a second grade teacher. "We needed help, but only we could decide exactly what kind of help."

Another needs assessment revealed that student achievement demanded a more intense focus on reading and writing as processes.

So Carver educators developed a sequence of reading and writing courses such as "Foundations of Reading" and "Diagnosing Reading Difficulties"—courses that have brought new skills and greater cohesion to the curriculum.

The staff also broadened its efforts to reach at-risk students, creating a parent resource center, hiring a parent outreach coordinator, and serving as mentors to more than 20 parents enrolled in GED programs.

Carver's teachers seem especially proud of the new sense of collegiality that their professional development program has created. Because they attend the same classes and study the same material, there's more dialogue, more sharing, more unity.

"We're getting the results we set out to get," says Wilson. "We're better able than ever before to help each other. And that's a tremendous plus for students."

For More Information

For information on grants available from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, call 202/822-7840 or visit the Foundation's Web site at www.nfie.org. For more information on Carver Elementary, contact Principal Loretha Taylor at 804/780-6247.

Joe Mahoney

When it came to professional development at Richmond's Carver Elementary, "We knew we had to capitalize on our in-house expertise," says Evette Wilson (front).

Idea Exchange

Professional Balance

The best way to develop professionally is to balance service with meaningful political action. As educators, we need to be activists and show that we care about the future of education.

That means:

- Joining a political action committee, writing local representatives, creating bulletin boards, and discussing educational concerns such as budget cuts. This will elevate education—the greatest profession in the world—to the level of esteem it deserves.
- Listening to public radio discussions about school reform. Learn about school finance and challenge those who say we're overpaid and unresourceful.
- Changing our image from servers to people of strength. So instead of wearing the "World's greatest teacher button," consider wearing the professional membership pin.

Spending extra hours after school leaves many of us feeling like dutiful public servants rather than proud professionals. This does not have to be. True professional development lies in becoming a voice for education.

Cecelia Schliepp
Hartland, Wisconsin

Special Committees

To promote professional development, the Lafayette Parish Association of Educators encourages members to serve on textbook adoption and other special committees to plan programs required by the district school board. By serving on these committees, members share their expertise with one another—and the whole district benefits.

Cheryl Stoute
Lafayette, Louisiana

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today*'s more than 2.2 million readers in one of four ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

What Works?
"What Works?" is a six-page summary of school-based HIV prevention and tobacco use prevention curriculums. The Centers for Disease Control's Research to the Classroom Project notes that these curriculums have been shown to reduce health risk behaviors among youth. For a free copy, call the NEA Health Information Network hotline at 800/718-8387.

True Story
Dawn's Story tells the simple and moving story about a young woman, a former international flight attendant, infected with HIV. Made by American Airlines for their health and safety training program, the film has been reviewed and deemed appropriate for teens by the National PTA. $3. Call 425/392-9161 to order.

Kick Butts Day
Some 3,000 children a day become regular smokers. Help battle the habit by promoting "Kick Butts Day," April 2. Free activity guides are available from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, 1707 L St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington DC 20036. Fax 202/296-5427 or visit the Web at www.kickbuttsday.org. Please indicate NEA membership when ordering.

Check-ups Made Easier
My First Check-Up, a new video for preschool children, comes with an accompanying teacher/parent guide that offers five steps for discussing medical check-ups with children to alleviate their fears. $30 from Gabor-Bonniere Productions, Ontario. Call 888/678-4736 to order.

Health Finder
At www.healthfinder.gov/, you'll find a gateway to hundreds of selected online publications, clearinghouses, databases, Web sites, and support and self-help groups. Also on hand are government agencies and not-for-profit organizations that produce reliable information for the public.

See Through a Thin Disguise

Frances M. Berg is a licensed nutritionist, adjunct professor at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine, and author of Afraid To Eat: Children and Teens in Weight Crisis *(Healthy Weight Publishing Network, $17.95). She spoke recently with Rena Large of NEA's Health Information Network about eating disorders in children.*

What does it mean when a student is diagnosed with an eating disorder?
The term "eating disorder" encompasses a group of eating habits and attitudes about weight and body image that are serious emotional problems and can cause life-threatening physical problems.

Eating disorders include anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and compulsive overeating.

Normally, we eat to sustain ourselves, for energy and nourishment. When people start eating for other reasons—to reshape their body, for example—they may develop chaotic, unhealthy eating patterns.

What causes these eating disorders?
Historically, eating disorders were treated as a mental problem, and children with the disorder and their families were held at fault. But today specialists are taking into account the influence that society has on a person's eating behaviors.

There is tremendous pressure to look a certain way, particularly for females. In the media, the ideal size for women and girls is about a third thinner than 20 years ago, which does not reflect the diversity of shapes and sizes of the average female. More recently, ideal men are appearing thinner and thinner as well.

So are teenage girls the students most likely to suffer from eating disorders?
Women and girls are more likely to have eating disorders—one-fourth of all teenage girls have some type of dysfunctional eating pattern. But eating disorders are becoming more common in men and boys now, too.

These problems can develop at any point in a person's life, but these patterns are often established very young.

In fact, there's been an increase in dysfunctional eating patterns and eating disorders among younger children in recent years. Many eating disorder specialists are suggesting we start addressing these issues as early as fifth and sixth grade, at a time when body image problems are starting to develop and before dysfunctional eating patterns are established.

What are the problems that students may suffer as a result of eating disorders?
Physical problems can include lack of energy, constant fatigue, chest and abdominal pain, sleep disturbances, and poor bone health. Young people may be devastated by moodiness and depression, irritability, and an inability to concentrate.

All of these can cause developmental problems in younger children and are potentially life-threatening. In turn, they significantly affect a child's ability to learn and achieve in school.

What signs can educators look out for?
Students suffering from an eating disorder will often be self-centered, preoccupied with their body, and withdrawn from family and friends. They also tend to be highly self-critical of the way they look and show irritation and disgust with themselves after eating.

Significant or extreme weight loss is another sign that something may be wrong. Swelling around the jaw may be an indication of purging, or frequent vomiting.

Students involved in athletics are more at risk for these problems because of the perceived need for physical perfection. Coaches and physical education teachers may be the first to recognize a problem.

What can schools do to address this issue?
The success rate for overcoming an eating disorder is very low—around 30 to 40 percent. So we have to be careful with how we treat these kids. Alienating them or making them feel at fault could make the problem worse.

Ideally, a school system should have on staff someone who has been trained on these issues—a counselor or a nutritionist who can offer further evaluation, support, and counseling for students when a problem is suspected.

In any case, there needs to be an established reporting process to help kids with problems. Every teacher and school employee should know whom they should report a problem to, and what the follow-up steps will be.

Schools could provide a great service if they had support groups for kids concerned with eating disorders—and educational opportunities for school employees to address this issue before long-term problems develop.

Resources

■ *Afraid To Eat: Children and Teens in Weight Crisis* includes a chapter on addressing eating disorders within comprehensive school health programs. $17.95 (paper) from Healthy Living Institute. Available in local bookstores or call 800/888-4741 to order.

■ Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention, Inc., a national nonprofit organization, offers several programs and activities for schools. Contact EDAP at 603 Stewart St., Suite 803, Seattle, WA 98101, 206/382-3587. Or visit the Web at members.aol.com/edapinc/home.html.

■ *My Life as a Male Anorexic* offers a unique view of anorexia and males, who make up five to 10 percent of all cases. $12.95 from Haworth Press, 800/342-9678.

■ The Council on Size and Weight Discrimination provides a free pamphlet. Send a SASE to P.O. Box 305, Mt. Marion, NY 12456.

■ *Am I Fat? Helping Young Children Accept Differences in Body Size* offers a book with advice for caregivers. $17.95 from ETR Associates, 800/321-4407.

Rights Watch

Will Congress Gag NEA Members?

There's a national effort under way to silence NEA members. Your state may be the next target.

Mannie Garcia

Virginia Education Association President Cheri James tells Congress that the "Worker Paycheck Fairness Act" seeks to "deny us the voice we have as an Association."

Now before Congress is legislation that would, if passed, make it almost impossible for organized educators to speak out effectively in legislative debates and political campaigns that involve education.

The "Paycheck Protection Act," a bill now before the Senate, would require NEA to get written permission from members before collecting or spending any dues money for "political activities."

And what are "political activities"?

Under the bill's broad definition, "political activities" would include everything from lobbying Congress to communicating to NEA members about pending legislation in *NEA Today* or campaigning against a ballot initiative designed to funnel public tax dollars into private schools.

The House version of the Senate legislation—the cleverly titled "Worker Paycheck Fairness Act"—would go even further. This bill, if enacted, would limit a union's freedom to spend dues money for any purpose not directly related to collective bargaining.

Simply collecting the signed authorizations mandated by this legislation, the AFL-CIO estimates, would cost unions $90 million in the first year.

What's the real purpose behind the Senate and House "paycheck protection" legislation?

The bills, says Cheri James, the president of the Virginia Education Association, aim to muzzle unions and remove union members from the public debate over political issues that impact their professions and their lives.

James made this point clear in testimony she delivered before Congress this past January.

Explained James: "The legislation we are debating today seeks to take me—a public school teacher from Richmond and teachers like me all over this country—out of the political process and deny us the voice we have as an Association and the freedom we share as Americans."

James gave Congress a vivid example of the problems the proposed gag legislation would create. The Virginia Education Association, she noted, is planning a workshop about the proposed new federal regulations that impact children with disabilities.

"Under the proposed legislation" James pointed out, "our Association could only provide the workshop after first obtaining the express written consent of all members to use a portion of their dues for this activity."

The gag legislation now before the House is as unfair as it is undemocratic. The legislation applies to unions and employee organizations, but not to corporations or any other membership organizations.

In the 1996 elections, corporations actually outspent unions 17 to 1, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics.

Unfortunately, the pending federal legislation is only the tip of the iceberg. At the state level, groups hostile to public education are spending big bucks to enact similar laws and initiatives. [See sidebar at right.]

Trent Lott, the Senate majority leader, and other supporters of the gag legislation pending in Congress are claiming that a new federal law is desperately needed because union members all over the country are now forced to contribute money to political causes they don't support.

"Millions of Americans," charges Lott's colleague, Don Nickles of Oklahoma, "are finding part of their paychecks taken from them without their voice or choice and used for political purposes with which they disagree."

This assertion is simply not true.

In fact, union membership is entirely voluntary. No one in the entire United States can be forced to join NEA or be compelled to support the Association's political activities.

Contrary to the claims made by Senate and House supporters of "paycheck protection" legislation, no NEA dues money is contributed to candidates or to campaigns for elective office.

All NEA campaign contributions come from the NEA Political Action Committee, which is funded entirely by voluntary NEA member contributions, not dues.

In about 20 states where school employees engage in collective bargaining, non-members can be required to pay a fee—an amount substantially less than dues—to the union to help pay the costs of bargaining and administering the contract.

But these non-member "fee-payers" cannot be—and are not—forced to pay for any union political activity. And unions are required, by law, to notify fee-payers of these rights annually.

These realities go conveniently unmentioned by promoters of "paycheck protection" legislation.

That's because what they're about "protecting" are anti-education candidates and policies that NEA members have been so effective campaigning against.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

In the States

What NEA members are now facing, NEA General Counsel Bob Chanin warned the NEA Board of Directors in December, is "a nationwide, coordinated effort" to destroy the ability of NEA members to speak out on the political issues that impact education.

That's no exaggeration.

The American Legislative Exchange Council has drafted model state legislation intended to gag unions and their members. Supporters claim to have sponsors to introduce this legislation in all 50 state legislatures.

Gag-rule advocates at the Americans for Tax Reform expect this state legislation "to pass" in Iowa, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.

Similar proposals, meanwhile, are likely to appear as ballot initiatives in Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and Oregon. Meeting in Miami last November, 32 Republican governors endorsed the California initiative, which will be on the ballot in June.

The California effort has been promoted by Governor Pete Wilson, with major financial backing from J. Patrick Rooney, a leading player in the national movement for taxpayer-subsidized private school vouchers.

John Hein of the California Teachers Association calls the initiative "a nationally funded, nationally driven scheme to silence those of us who defend public schools."

NEA is developing a national strategy against this national gag drive—and has created a joint project with the AFL-CIO to help state affiliates counter the distortions the gag-rule advocates are spreading.

NEA will move to challenge the constitutionality of any gag legislation that passes. At presstime, in fact, NEA was filing a lawsuit in Idaho seeking to strike down a newly enacted gag law there.

The NEA challenge notes that the Idaho statute violates the free speech rights of NEA members.

Court challenges like this may or may not prove successful. In the end, there's only one sure way NEA members can stop the implementation of gag laws—by organizing to prevent their passage in the first place.

—M.D.S.

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

When visiting Web sites, I'm often asked to accept a "cookie." What does that mean? Should I refuse?

Cookies are pieces of information generated by a Web site you're visiting and sent to your computer, where they are stored for future access by the site. Have no fear—for the most part, Web sites use cookies to enhance your visit.

How do they do this? Because cookies contain user-specific information, they allow Web pages to be customized just for you.

For example, cookies can be used to personalize Web search engines or store lists of items you have previously selected while browsing through a virtual shopping mall.

Web servers automatically gain access to relevant cookies stored on your computer whenever you revisit the Web site. Unless you set your browser to notify you when it is sent a cookie, you'll never notice that personal information is being stored.

Generally, cookies contain two kinds of information:

- That which you've explicitly supplied to a Web site—such as passwords, your name, or other personal information.
- Generic information obtained by the Web site—such as the type of Web browser, computer, and software you're using.

If you want to keep any of this information private, then you should set your browser to prompt you when cookies are sent—and refuse to accept them.

Be aware, however, that some Web programs and database applications track and store the same information about you that they otherwise would have managed with cookies. Cookies are simply a programming convenience.

To learn more about cookies, check out Netscape's site, at www.netscape.com/assist/security/faqs/cookies.html, and Cookie Central, at www.cookiecentral.com/n_cookie_faq.htm.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more Q&As.

Friendly User

The Spirit of Cooperation

Andra Van Kerkpen

At Minnesota's Area Learning Center, teacher Steve Hansen leads the Pilot Program, which combines technology and real-life experiences in a cooperative learning setting.

Who:
Steven Hansen and Tami DeLand, teachers at the Area Learning Center (ALC), an alternative school for at-risk tenth through twelfth graders in St. Cloud, Minnesota

E-mail address:
shansenalc@aol.com

What:
Students once on the brink of failure are thriving at the ALC, thanks to a technology-infused, cooperative learning program.

Inspiration:
Four years ago, a new director asked for help in changing ALC's focus from independent study to a cooperative learning environment that relies heavily on computer and video technology.

"Steve and I bit—and we haven't slept since," DeLand says happily.

Hansen and DeLand created the Pilot Program, in which 75 students learn in multi-age classes organized around thematic units such as "Youth and the Law."

Students work in trios, drawing their content from community collaborations. At the end of each two-month unit, trios demonstrate their findings in a multimedia presentation.

Lesson:
The ALC is a last stop for some of St. Cloud's toughest cases. Students, who range in age from 16 to 20, typically have learning disabilities or attention or behavioral disorders, work below grade level, and are behind in credits toward graduation. Many have drug or alcohol problems, and many are victims of abuse.

"The one thing they invariably have in common is that they're nonattenders," DeLand says. "They've either dropped out of school or they're mental checkouts, no longer engaged in their learning.

"And they come to us technology-phobic," she continues. "They're the kids who were kicked out of technology classes, who were denied the privilege of time in the computer lab."

Yet in no time, they're using the ALC's video camera to make a documentary, or putting together a multimedia slide show.

And sometimes their work draws an impressive audience. When some students gave a presentation on "Youth and Gun Violence" to the Minnesota legislature, they caught the eye of the state medical association, which was lobbying for a trigger-lock bill. The association called on the students to testify before the legislature—an experience they never would have had in their previous high schools, say Hansen and DeLand.

How do "technophobic" students get up to speed so quickly? For one, Hansen says, computers are right in the classrooms, not down the hall in an inaccessible and underused lab.

But it's the program's cooperative nature that makes the mastery of technical skills easy.

"Those with higher ability or who are quicker studies automatically become mentors to their peers," DeLand explains. "In every trio, there's at least one technology expert. Teachers serve as backups, but it's a peer showing them the ropes."

This cooperation extends to the staff, who spend Thursday afternoons helping each other pick up new skills—and sometimes the lines of learning overlap.

For a software training workshop, "We had every staff member bring a student to learn side by side with them," DeLand says. "That way, when a teacher went back into the classroom, she already had a student mentor to help her."

The ALC has worked its wonders with only 17 Macs, a scanner, a digital camera, a video camera, and two Internet connections. Six Zip drives have helped with storing large multimedia files of student work, and AlphaSmarts, inexpensive basic keyboards, come in handy during presentation crunch time.

"We're quite proud of what we've been able to do with limited technology," Hansen says.

Click:
The emphasis on real-world experiences and the hands-on use of technology, Hansen and DeLand believe, help students finally make the connection between education and their lives. And the results are clear:

- "Attendance at our parent conferences is always between 94 and 98 percent," Hansen says.
- "These kids were nonattenders—they had attendance rates of 30 to 50 percent in their mainstream schools," DeLand says. "In a bad week, our attendance will be 75 percent."
- "It's common at semester break to have kids come back as college students and tell us how they're doing," she adds.

For More Information

For more on the ALC as well as other programs that use technology to reach at-risk kids, check out Technology for Diverse Learners, *a Teacher-to-Teacher Book from NEA's Professional Library. $9.95 for NEA members. Stock #2908-9-00-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.*

Click Here

Tracking Needy Students

In 1990, Santa Rosa County schools, in Florida's Panhandle, began the Full-Service Schools Program, which integrates school-based and community services for students with health, behavioral, substance abuse, and truancy problems.

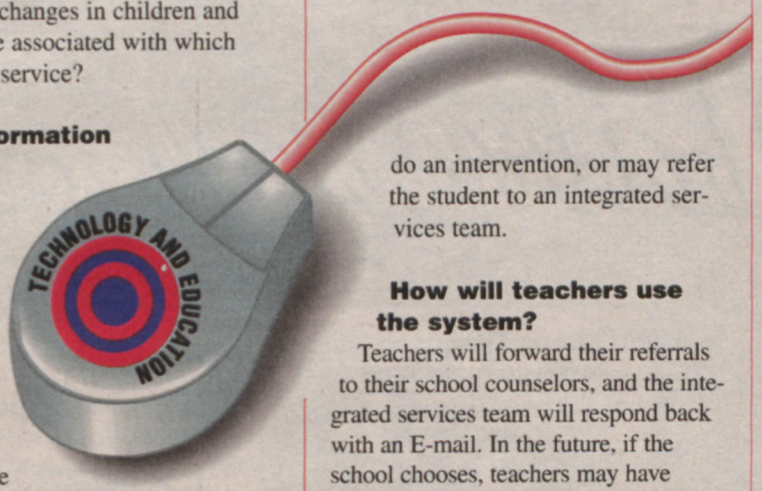
This year, the program is going hi-tech, with a computerized system for identifying and tracking needy students. Program coordinator Carol Calfee spoke recently with NEA's Center for Education Technology about the process.

What are the program's goals?

Our district is socioeconomically diverse, with pockets of poverty. But, we've found that the complex needs of kids don't follow the poverty lines. Kids in middle- and upper-income homes can be just as needy, especially when it comes to mental health.

As services for students and families have expanded, the need for a computer-managed information system has become critical to answer four questions:

- Which students are in need of services?
- What services do students and families use in the program?
- What are community partners doing to meet the needs of students and families?
- What changes in children and families are associated with which patterns of service?



What information does the system track?

To answer our first question—to identify students—the software tracks such data as promotion status, attendance history, discipline incidents, mobility, referrals for assistance to student assistance teams, academic scores, and the use of medications.

To answer the other three questions, the system ties student interventions back to individual student outcomes.

How does technology help?

We're using microcomputers and mainframes with a graphic user interface. All 28 of our schools are connected in a Wide Area Network (WAN).

The software that we're currently putting in place uses school-based data to automatically generate risk profiles and alerts. School counselors will review the risk profiles and may do an intervention, or may refer the student to an integrated services team.

How will teachers use the system?

Teachers will forward their referrals to their school counselors, and the integrated services team will respond back with an E-mail. In the future, if the school chooses, teachers may have access to the computer screen that shows which interventions were chosen for the student.

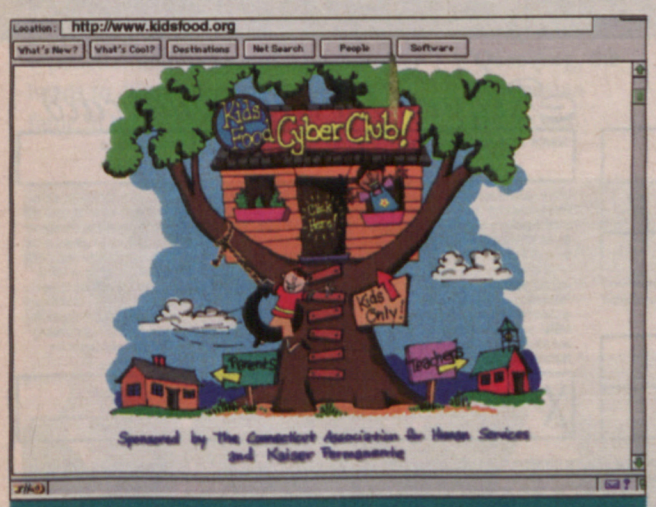
What results are expected?

The system will help our schools become "smarter." They will have access to information that allows more preventive and proactive interventions. And paperwork that took hours and sometimes weeks to collect and complete will be processed in seconds.

For More Information

For additional information, E-mail Carol Calfee, coordinator of integrated services for the Santa Rosa County School Board, at CarolC5990@aol.com.

Screen Shots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What's New? What's Cool? Destinations Net Search People Software
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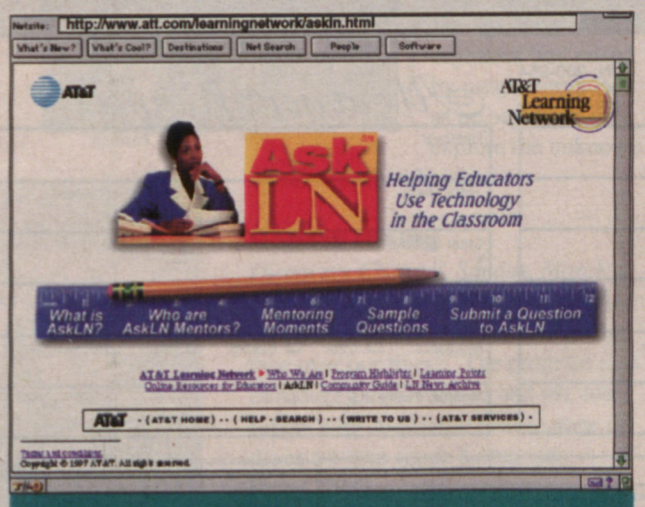
www.kidsfood.org
Have your class join the Kids Food CyberClub. This Web site features activities and games that make learning about healthy food fun, as well as teacher and parent guides.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www.att.com/learningnetwork/askln.html
AskLN is dedicated to helping educators use technology in the classroom. Ask a question about technology and receive an answer back from one of the educators who serve as AskLN mentors.

New & Noteworthy

Brochures on Technology
Software Press has just released five brochures about electronic copyright issues and managing computer labs:

- *Where Credit Is Due—Citing Electronic Sources*
- *A Student Guide to Citing Electronic Resources*
- *Top Ten Things To Do Before Calling Tech Support*
- *Software Companies Revealed on the Web*
- *Creating a Software Library for Preschoolers*

Brochures are $2 each, or 30 copies of one title for $30. For more information, call 713/467-8686 or E-mail csoft@childsoftpress.com.

Looking for Freebies?
Visit Bob Bowman's Guide to Free Educational Technology at www.user.shentel.net/rbowman. You'll find how-to guides, educational freeware, online tutorials, free support sites, and links to other helpful Web resources.

Positively Poetry
Have your students contribute their own poetry to Positively Poetry at advicom.net/~e-media/kv/poetry1.html. This Web site, created by a 14-year-old, accepts submissions from kids ages 5 to 15.

Lessons in Change
The What's Working in Education Web site, at www.benton.org/Practice/Edu/, looks at how educators are trying to cope with technological change in the classroom. Educators provide real-world examples of how to—and how not to—use computers in teaching.

PD Online
Link2Learn, at l2l.ed.psu.edu (those are "L's" in the URL, not ones), is a new professional development site from the state of Pennsylvania. Tutorials, printable workshop kits, and classroom activities are some of the resources available on the site.

Resource Directory
Go to the Internet Education Resource Guide at www.ierc.com for a collection of educational companies' Web sites.

This easy-to-navigate site is set up so that you can browse companies by curriculum area and place orders right online for books, posters, CD-ROMs, resource materials, and lots of free stuff.

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Employer | Position

Years There | Annual Salary $

Other Income* $ | Source

*Alimony, child support, or separate maintenance income need not be revealed if you do not wish it considered as a basis for repayment.

Residence: ❑ Own ❑ Buying ❑ Rent ❑ Other

Monthly Payment $

Request for additional card

Name of Authorized User | Relationship

I have read this application and everything I have stated in it is true. MBNA America Bank, N.A. (MBNA) is authorized to check my credit, employment history or any other information and to report to others such information and credit experience with me. If I do not qualify for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, I will automatically be considered for the NEA School Days account. I understand that the acceptance or use of any card issued will be subject to the terms of this application and the Credit Card Agreement that will be sent with the card, and agree to be responsible for all charges incurred according to such terms. I am at least 18 years of age. I consent to and authorize MBNA America Bank, N.A. and MBNA's affiliates to monitor and/or record my telephone conversations with any of their representatives to better ensure quality service. I accept that MBNA may, at its discretion, periodically consider any account for an automatic upgrade. Unless I write to MBNA at: P.O. Box 15432, Wilmington, DE. 19885 I agree that MBNA may share with MBNA Corp. and its subsidiaries only, information about me or my account for marketing and administrative purposes. By signing this application, I certify that I am a member in good standing of the National Education Association.

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Signature Date

Annual Fee	None.
Annual Percentage Rate (APR)	NEA *Platinum Plus* account: 15.1% for purchases, which may vary. NEA School Days account: 15.6% for purchases, which may vary.
Variable-Rate Information	Your APR may vary. The APR is determined by adding a margin to the highest U.S. Prime Rate as published in *The Wall Street Journal* on the 15th of March, June, September, and December. For the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, the margin is 6.6% percentage points, for the NEA School Days account the margin is 7.1% percentage points. On December 15, 1997 the U.S. Prime Rate was 8.5%.
Grace Period for Repayment of Balances for Purchases	At least 25 days from statement closing date.
Method of Computing the Balance for Purchases	Average daily balance (including new purchases).
Transaction Fee for Purchases	Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets, and casino gaming chips: 2% of each such purchase; $2 minimum, $10 maximum.
Transaction Fee for Cash Advances and Fees for Paying Late or Exceeding the Credit Limit	Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances: 2% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Transaction fee for credit card cash advance checks: 1% of each cash advance; $2 minimum, $10 maximum. Late Payment Fee: $10. Over-the-Credit-Limit Fee: $10.

†The current promotional APR offer for all cash advances and balance transfers made with either account is 5.9% through your first five statement closing dates commencing the month after your account is opened. Thereafter, the APR for all new and outstanding cash advance balances will be calculated according to the Variable-Rate Information appearing at left. The current indexed APR for cash advances is 15.1% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, or 15.6% for the NEA School Days account, each APR may vary. MBNA may allocate your monthly payments to your promotional APR balance(s) before your nonpromotional APR balance(s).

††If your application is approved with a credit line of less than $5,500, you will receive an NEA School Days Credit Card. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, e.g., MasterPurchase Protection is not available and maximum Common Carrier Travel Accident Insurance is up to $300,000. Certain restrictions apply to these and other benefits as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened.

The NEA is not involved in the credit decision process. Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program. All applications will be subject to a confidential standard review by MBNA America.

MBNA America Bank, N.A. is the exclusive issuer and administrator of the *Platinum Plus* credit card program.

The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew his/her membership, that person and their family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates and fees offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered.

The information about the costs of the card described in this application is accurate as of 11/97. The information may have changed after that date. To find out what may have changed, call us at (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

Platinum Passage Travel Services are the responsibility of, and are provided to, MBNA America® customers by an independently owned and operated travel agency.

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Mail your signed application to: NEA Credit Card Program; c/o MBNA America Bank, N.A.; P.O. Box 15464; Wilmington, DE 19850-5464

CCNT0398

Heads Up!

TV Tips

The American Experience: Surviving the Dust Bowl

PBS, Monday, March 2, 9-10 p.m. ET, check local listings. From 1930 to 1940, dust storms—called "Black Blizzards"—ravaged the Plains, causing disease, hardship, and death. This program looks at those who stayed on and continued their way of life, despite dust and darkness.

Egypt Uncovered

Discovery Channel, Monday-Wednesday, March 2-4, check local listings for times. From kings and pyramids, to deities and mummies, this five-part miniseries reveals the secrets of ancient Egypt and looks at new archaeological discoveries that are changing what's known about Egypt. Rated TV-G.

ABC

Gold Rush

ABC, Sunday, March 8, 7-9 p.m. ET. Set in the late 1800s, this Wonderful World of Disney show (photo above) tells the real-life story of a spirited young woman who, armed with a typewriter and a sense of adventure, heads to Alaska seeking fortune and fame in the frozen frontier.

Bug Juice

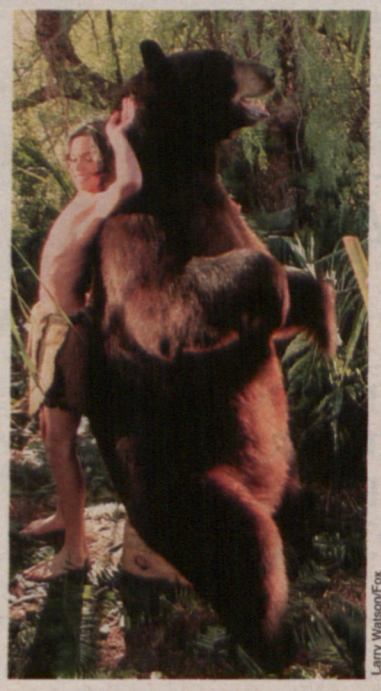
Disney Channel, premieres Sunday, March 1, 5-6 p.m. ET. This new 18-episode series transports viewers to Camp Wazi-yatah in Maine for an up-close look at the traditional summer camp experience. Each half-hour video journal is seen through the eyes and anecdotes of the camp's boys and girls, aged 12 to 15. Rated TV-G.

The Great Depression

The History Channel, Monday-Thursday, March 9-12, 10 p.m. ET. This four-part documentary hosted by former New York Governor Mario Cuomo examines the financial catastrophe that threw Americans into an era of despair and courage.

Moby Dick

USA Network, Sunday-Monday, March 15-16, 8-10 p.m. ET. Herman Melville's classic American novel depicting the struggle of wills between the crusty Captain Ahab and his nemesis, Moby Dick (photo below), comes to the screen in this four-hour miniseries, which features Ishmael, the ex-school teacher, along with Queequeg, the Polynesian harpooner.



Larry Watson/Fox

Glory and Honor

TNT, late change to Sunday, March 1, 8-10 p.m. ET. This film chronicles the true story of Robert Peary and Matthew Henson's successful trek to the North Pole. Upon their return to the States, Peary was made a hero, while Henson, a Black man (photo at left), was relegated to obscurity. You can get a classroom guide on the Web at www.tnt.turner.com/tntoriginals.

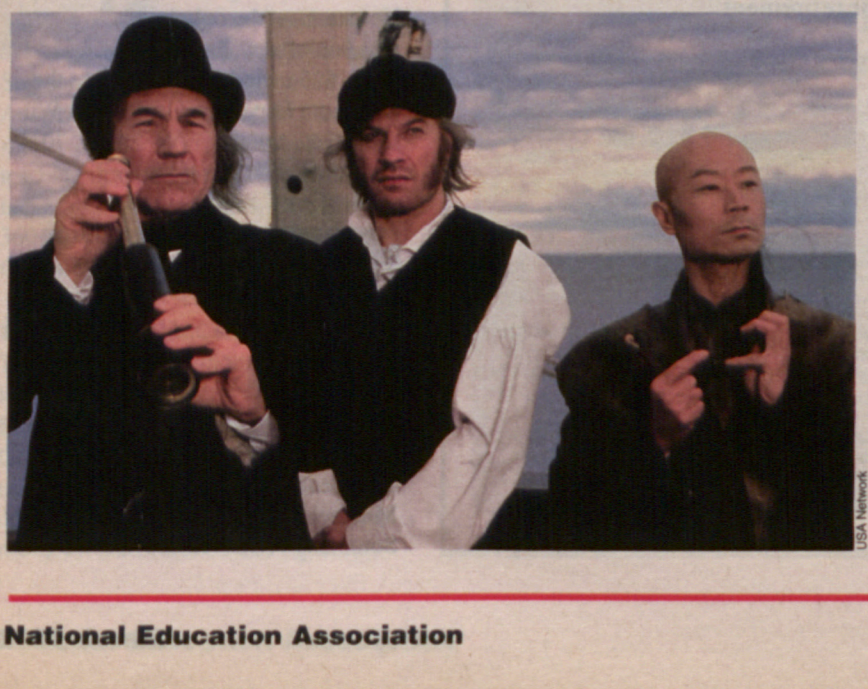
TNT/Jose Azel

Nick News Special Edition: The Body Trap

Nickelodeon, Wednesday, March 11 and Thursday, March 26, 5:30-6 a.m. ET. Hosted by Linda Ellerbee and featuring talk show host Rosie O'Donnell, this program addresses the issue of body image—including the media's role in shaping people's images of themselves. The show also provides the opportunity for children and teens to express their feelings about their looks.

Mowgli: The New Adventures of the Jungle Book

Fox Kids, Saturdays, 8 a.m. ET, check local listings. Rudyard Kipling's classic stories inspired this new live-action series shot on location in Costa Rica (photo at left). The series follows Mowgli, the orphaned boy raised by jungle animals, as he begins to explore the unknown world of human beings.



USA Network

Robots Rising

Discovery Channel, Sunday, March 15, 9-11 p.m. ET. This special examines the question: "Will robots really take over our lives?" The program also introduces sophisticated and life-like robots with surprising film footage of the latest man-made humanoids. Rated TV-G.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's electronic media. For additional listings and support materials, go to www.kidsnet.org and www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.

school stories

Here's your chance to see episodes you may have missed of *School Stories*, the series from NEA and The Learning Channel that shows what's really happening in America's classrooms. Here's the schedule:

Class Act
Sunday, March 8, 9 a.m. ET. Rhode Island teacher Mary Lee Drouin loves to use her singing and theatrical talent to teach English. Watch this class act share her talent and passion for literature.

Second-Chance High
Sunday, March 15, 9 a.m. ET. What happens when you mix high school students who were expelled, kids who dropped out, and older welfare recipients who are back in school? In Shreveport, Louisiana, the answer is learning—the key is teaching to a variety of learning styles.

The Struggle for Safety
Sunday, March 22, 9 a.m. ET. In Long Beach, California, it's an everyday struggle to keep the influence of local gangs from creeping into school hallways. Take a look at some of the measures that some school employees use to keep students safe.

Plugging into Technology
Sunday, March 29, 9 a.m. ET. With the help of a federal grant, a rural South Dakota school in one of America's poorest counties goes hi-tech with computers and cameras. Even more impressive: how one veteran teacher masters the technology and encourages her colleagues to do the same.

Connecting with Kids
Sunday, April 5, 9 a.m. ET. A visit with two veteran NEA members—Minnesota's Mary Beth Blegen and Texan John Furst—both known for getting the best from their students. Watch them as they work magic in their classrooms.

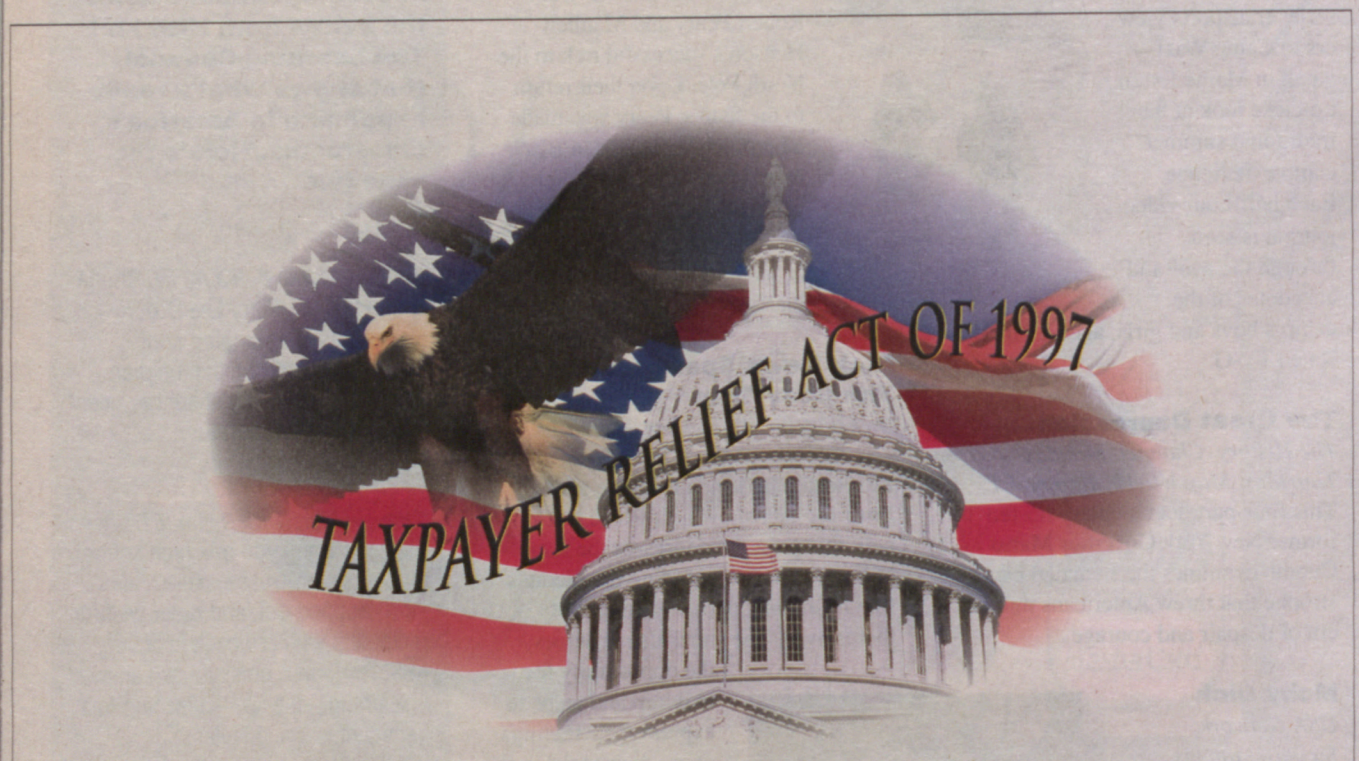
BONUS: As an added plus for NEA members, each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after it airs with an additional 15 to 20 minutes of tips from the educators featured. For details or to order, call 800/229-2400.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Smithsonian Lesson Plans

Smithsonian in Your Classroom: Lesson Plans from Art to Zoo offers fourth through ninth grade teachers classroom-ready materials from many of the Smithsonian's exhibits and programs. Each of the four quarterly issues explores a single topic in an interdisciplinary way. Free. Contact the Smithsonian Office of Education, Arts and Industries Building 1163, MRC 402, Washington, DC 20560. For a large print or disk version, fax your request—with your name, school name, and address—to 202/357-2116.



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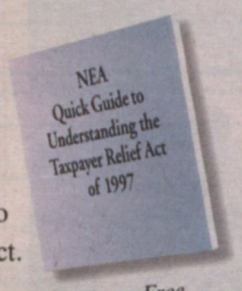

Yours Free

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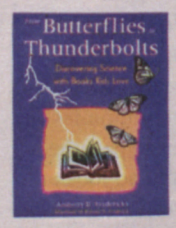
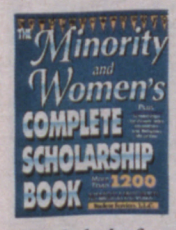
Discipline Checklist

Sixty elementary teachers share their secrets of classroom management and suggestions for motivating today's kids in *The Discipline Checklist* by Ken Kosier. $4.50 for NEA members. Contact the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. Use stock #2152-5-00-FF.



Science through Literature

The shortest way to learning is through kids' favorite books. That's the idea behind Anthony Fredericks's *From Butterflies to Thunderbolts: Discovering Science with Books Kids Love*. $17.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Fulcrum Books, 350 Indiana St., Suite 350, Golden, CO 80401, 800/992-2908.



News About Scholarships

For women and minority students seeking a college education but struggling to find the funds, here's help from a leading scholarship firm. *The Minority and Women's Complete Scholarship Book* offers info and advice in the dash for college cash. $18.95 plus $4 s&h. Contact Sourcebooks at 800/432-7444.

In the News

Is Seeing Believing. . . How Can You Tell What's Real? shows students how photos can be manipulated and how to analyze pictures for fairness and accuracy. For use with or without a class visit to the Newseum—"the only interactive museum of news"—in Rosslyn, Virginia. $25 includes s&h. Contact the Newseum Education Dept., 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209, 703/284-3545, www.newseum.org.

Working Lives

Help Wanted: Short Stories about Young People Working, edited by Anita Silvey, takes a literary look at why teens work, with stories and recollections by writers like Michael Dorris, Ray Bradbury, Gary Soto, and Vivien Alcock. $15.95 plus

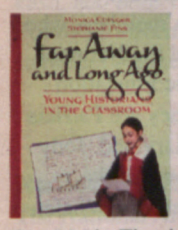
Heads Up

$3 s&h. Contact Little, Brown, & Co., 800/759-0190. On the Web: www.littlebrown.com.

Health Matters
Elementary students can learn about healthy living by taking a look at *Health Matters*, a series of four books by Steck-Vaughn Publishers. Each book in the series explores a different health topic—food, exercise, drugs, and hygiene. $15.48 plus $3.50 handling plus 6 percent shipping. Contact Steck/Vaughn at 800/531-5015. On the Web: www.steckvaughn.com.

Shakespeare Series
The newest title in the Oxford School Shakespeare series, *Antony and Cleopatra*, includes unabridged text, student notes, historical background, and a wide range of suggested activities. $7.50 (s&h varies by state). Contact Oxford University Press at 800/451-7556 or fax 919/677-1303.

Cosby Books
Bill Cosby, one of America's most beloved storytellers, has turned his attention to beginning readers. His *Little Bill* series offers lessons about friendship, family, and fairness. $13.95 ($3.99 paperback) plus $2.25 s&h for orders under $25. Call Cartwheel Press/Scholastic at 800/724-6527 or fax 800/223-4011. On the Web: www.scholastic.com.



Elementary History
Get students interested in history by letting them tell their own, say teachers Monica Edinger and Stephanie Fins in *Far Away and Long Ago: Young Historians in the Classroom*. The book offers examples and teaching tips. $16 plus $3.50 s&h. Contact Stenhouse Publishers, P.O. Box 360, York, ME 03909, 800/988-9812. On the Web: www.stenhouse. com.

Science/Math CDs
The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse for Mathematics and Science Education has issued two volumes of CD-ROMs for educators. One features stories of teachers across the country applying innovative teaching methods. The other covers topics in math and science education today. One copy free to every school if the request is on letterhead, signed by the principal, and faxed to 614/292-2066. For more information, call 800/621-5785.

Scads of Stats
Scads of official U.S. Government statistics, laws, medical research projects, educational studies and reports, and income tax forms are available on CD-ROM and listed in a free catalog. For a copy, fax your name and mailing address to Catalog of Official Electronic Information Products, 202/512-1656. You can also find government information online at www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/.

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CNN Financial News, June 5, 1997

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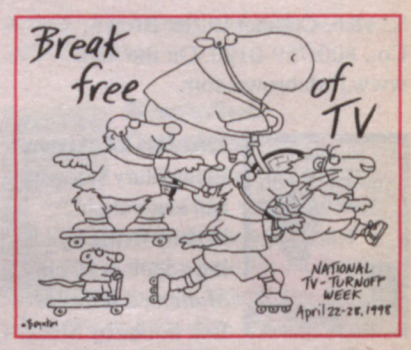
Events

National TV-Turnoff Week

The average American youth spends more time watching television— 1,500 hours per year—than in school—900 hours per year.

To reduce the amount of time kids park in front of the tube, TV-Free America is sponsoring the fourth annual National TV-Turnoff Week, April 22-28.

For an organizer's kit—which includes pledge cards, color posters, bumper stickers, talking points, and more—send $10 to TV-Free America, 1611 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 3A, Washington, DC 20009, 202/887-0436, Fax 202/518-5560. Send E-mail to tvfa@essential.org.



Internet Expedition

GlobaLearn, Inc., is seeking K-12 teachers and students who want to go on a journey through South America via the World Wide Web to explore the cultural and environmental diversity of Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador.

From now until May 15, you can access explorers' journals, travel logs, photos, and video clips, as well as post questions to the team and interact with other participating schools. Contact GlobaLearn at www.globalearn.org.

Grants

Teaching Tolerance Grants

Teaching Tolerance magazine offers grants of up to $2,000 to K-12 teachers for small-scale projects that promote acceptance of diversity, peacemaking, or any other aspect of tolerance education. Deadline: open. Contact Teaching Tolerance Grants, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104, Fax 334/264-3121, or check the Web at www.splcenter.org.

Awards / Scholarships

Geography Education

Kudos to the five NEA members who won $750 and attended the National Council for Geographic Education meeting this winter. They are Patricia King Robeson from Maryland, Jody Smothers Marcello from Alaska, Helen Johnson and Maureen Whalen Spaight from Rhode Island, and Linda Hammon from Texas.

Team Teaching Winners

NEA members were on two teacher teams that won $3,000 Prentice Hall/National Middle School Association Teaching Team Awards for outstanding interdisciplinary projects.

Patty Gibian, Raymond Perkins, Ruth Woodie, and Steve Burke won for Georgetown Middle School in Kentucky. And John Grebeck, Patricia Baer, Eileen Maher, and Frank Barto won for Hillside Avenue School in Cranford, New Jersey.

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Household Finance Personal Loan (21.75% APR)	$617	$2,056	$3,084	$5,140
Bank One Personal Loan (20.49% APR)	$580	$1,933	$2,900	$4,833
NEA Credit Plan (14.90% APR)	$418	$1,393	$2,090	$3,484
FIRST YEAR YOU SAVE UP TO	$199	$663	$994	$1,656

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Contests

Young Inventors

Entries are due for the Craftsman/NSTA Young Inventors Award Program sponsored by Sears, Roebuck and Company and the National Science Teachers Association. To enter, students in grades 4-6 are asked to invent and build or modify a tool. The national winner receives a $10,000 U.S. savings bond. Deadline: March 19. Contact Craftsman/NSTA Young Inventors Awards Program, NSTA, 1840 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201. On the Web: www.nsta.org/programs/craftsman.htm.

Sailing

The America's Cup team "Young America," in partnership with teachers from the Technology Education Association of Maine (TEAM), is planning the fourth annual Young America's Cup Challenge for students.

This multi-disciplinary activity will mirror the real challenge of developing an America's Cup team. For the first time, a national competition will be held in Portland, Maine, on May 23.

Contact Steve Drake, Young America, 707 Sable Oaks Rd., South Portland, ME 04106-3279, 207/774-7880. On the Web, check out www.youngamerica.org. Send E-mail to sdrake@youngamerica.org.

Elementary Science

Lanacane and the Association for Science-Technology Centers are sponsoring the "Itching To Know" science contest for K-6 teachers and students. Teachers are invited to submit their best science lesson plan. Students are invited to ask questions they're "itching to know." Prizes include software, cash, and books. Deadline: April 1. For more information, send E-mail to Itchrelief@aol.com.

Summer Fellowships

National Archives

The National Archives is offering a summer institute, from June 23 to July 2 in Washington, D.C. , on the use of original documents in the classroom. The cost of the institute is $100. For details, contact the Education Staff, 18N, National Archives, Washington, DC 20408, 202/501-6172. Send E-mail to education@arch1.nara.gov.

Colonial History

Elementary and middle school teachers may be interested in workshops on early American history offered this summer in Colonial Williamsburg. Application deadline: May 1. Contact the Department of School and Group Services, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P.O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187, 757/220-7582.

Environmental Health

The Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute is offering free one- and two-day environmental health teacher training workshops between July 13 and 24. Conducted in small-group settings, the workshops include training in hands-on activities and field trips, conversations with professionals in the field, and a tour of research facilities. For details, contact EOHSI, 170 Frelinghuysen Rd., P.O. Box 1179, Piscataway, NJ 08855, 732/445-0110, Fax 732/445-0122.

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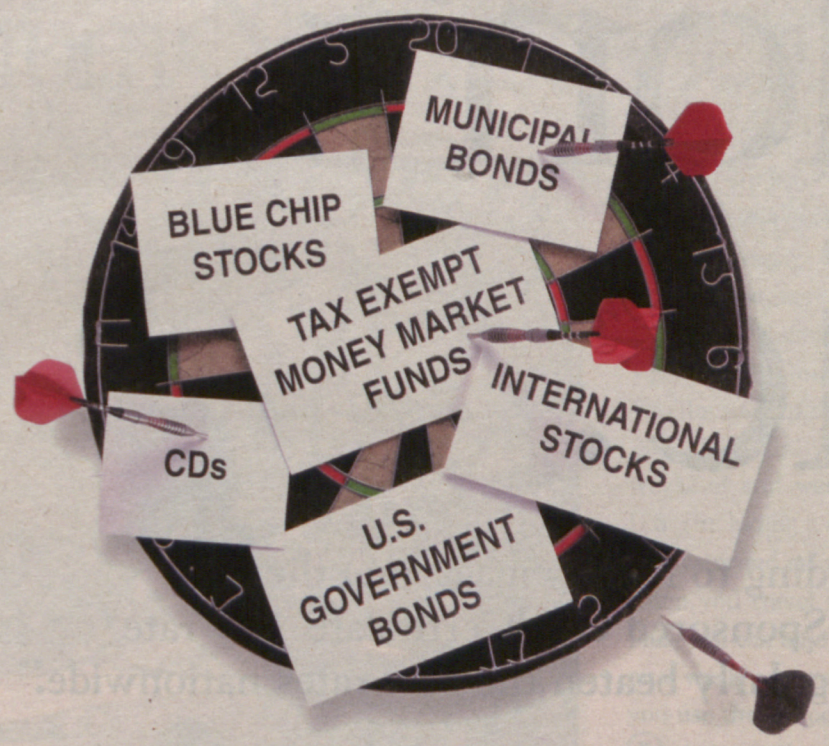

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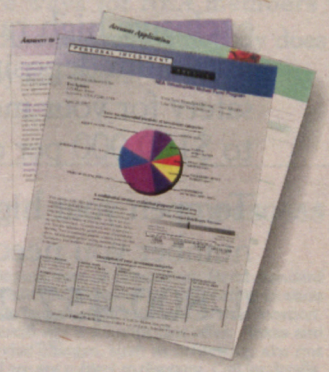
To receive your questionnaire call 1-800-637-4636, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET, and let us help point you in the right direction.



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***Money* magazine, February 1998

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Heads Up

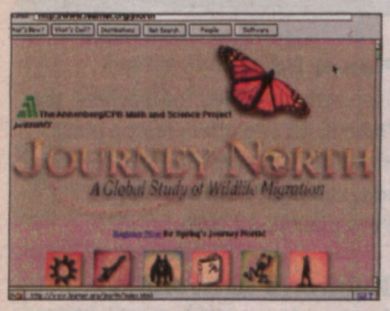
Language Camps

WIESCO, INC., a Wisconsin-based non-profit organization, is looking for 50 volunteer teachers to staff five English language camps, three in Poland and two in Latvia. In addition, WIESCO will select up to 40 high school students to travel with teachers and assist with the program. Teachers and students are responsible for air fare and registration fees. Local transportation and lodging are covered by sponsoring agencies of the local country. Camp dates: June 24-July 23. For details, contact Brendan Kunda at 715/385-2390. On the Web, go to www.gonwt.com/wiesco1.htm.

Web Winners

Migration

The Journey North: A Global Study of Wildlife Migration features a teacher's manual and discussion site, and opportunities for you and your students to report sightings of wildlife moving north this spring. Go to www.learner.org/jnorth.



Perusing Perseus

Learn all about Perseus, the Greek myths, Greek art, archaeology, and language at this Web site: www.perseus.tufts.edu.

Free Web Sites for Schools

In January, Homework Heaven announced that it will provide three megabytes of Web space free to every school in America. You can register or reserve your school Web space at www.homeworkheaven.com/hosting/.

Booklovers Web Site

Here's a new site for kids and adults alike, courtesy of Random House publishers. The site includes writing contests, activities, and book reviews by kids. Check it out at www.kidsatrandom.com.

Librarians Rate the Web

After searching 50,000 Web sites, nine of the nation's top librarians found 700 they recommend as great for kids. To check out their finds, visit the American Library Association's site at www.ala.org/parentspage/greatsites/.

Distance Learning

The North West Regional Educational Laboratory provides resources and tips on distance learning and other forms of technology at www.netc.org.

Internet Training

The National Cable Television Association and TECH CORPS™ have

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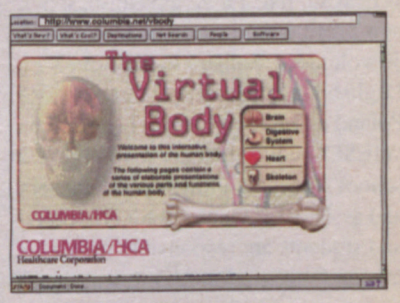
Heads Up

created webTeacher, an 80-hour, self-guided tutorial on how to use the Internet, create your own home page, discover curriculum materials, and more. Go to www.web teacher.org.

Web Encyclopedia
Encyclopaedia Britannica has created the Britannica Internet Guide, which classifies, rates, and reviews more than 65,000 Web sites. You can browse by topic or search at www.ebig.com.

Human Anatomy
Want to give your students an inside look at the human body? Take a look at this site by Columbia/HCA, featuring an interactive model of the human body. Go to The Virtual Body site at www.columbia.net/vbody/.



Planetary Studies
Exploring Planets in the Classroom, from the Hawaii Space Grant Consortium, features more than 25 hands-on science activities, including a tour of the planet. Go to www.soest.hawaii.edu/SPACEGRANT/class_acts/.

Planet Ed
Especially designed for teachers, the PlanetK-12 site offers lesson plans, education news, research, job information, and more. Check it out at www.planetk-12.com.

Children's Artwork
Here's a site to showcase your students' artwork and hotlink to other museum sites. Take a look at the Global Show-n-Tell Museum at www.telenaut.com/gst/.

Science and Nutrition
Here's a site brought to you by the organization that published the fatty truth about movie theater popcorn. The Center for Science in the Public Interest site is chock full of nutrition info, facts about foods, and a special area just for kids. Take a look at www.cspinet.org.

Physics
The Interactive Physics and Math with Java site uses models to explain physics phenomena, including diffraction of light, the spring pendulum, and induced current. Check it out at www.lightlink.com/sergey/java/.

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MBNT0398

In the Light Lane

The Forecast Calls for Math

Since they're just beginning to learn about early American history, my third graders have very limited knowledge of the period.

"What would you call dropping tea in the Boston Harbor?" I asked them.

"Pollution!" they answered.

Betty Strawcutter
Sylvania, Ohio

A friend preparing to begin her student teaching visited my school to get some insight into which grade she wanted to be assigned.

In the first grade classroom, one little boy asked her how old she was.

"I'm in my twenties," she replied.

"Oh boy, I'm only in my sixes!" he exclaimed.

That was enough to convince her to do her student teaching with the first graders.

Jessica Stafford
Clarkdale, Arizona

Years ago, at a faculty meeting at my high school, we discussed how to control students as they changed classes. Our principal and staff agreed that students needed to see more teachers in the halls—that students should be exposed to greater teacher presence.

The following day, after the student announcements had been read over the P.A. system during homeroom, the principal took up the microphone and told the teachers—as they had agreed—to get into the halls and expose themselves.

Ira Lee Riddle
Warminster, Pennsylvania

At one of the middle schools I travel to as an itinerant teacher of the deaf, I was reviewing the traffic light colors with one of my deaf students. I asked in sign language, "What does the green light mean?"

She signed, "Go!"

"What does the red light mean?"

She signed, "Stop."

And finally, "What does the yellow light mean?"

"Go fast, fast, fast!" she signed.

Shirley Jones
Crystal River, Florida

In my job as a Title I teacher, I regularly go into other classrooms. One hectic day, I rushed in to teach the math lesson.

A very bright student raised his hand and said, "Mrs. Barnes, I don't believe the weatherman called for any math today."

Betty Barnes
Glen, Mississippi

One of last year's students stopped me in the hall with news about another classmate.

"Did you hear about Cassie? Her spandex almost burst!"

I said, "Oh, what a terrible thing to have happen on picture day," thinking how embarrassed Cassie must have been when her pants split.

Then Mallory added, "Yeah, and she's still in the hospital, too!"

(Cassie recovered nicely from her appendicitis.)

Michelle Moore
Pocatello, Idaho

When I was teaching junior high many years ago, my family bought a small farm to have the experience of raising horses. My students frequently came out to ride.

One day I announced that there would be no riding, because the horses were going to be shod—a word that was apparently not familiar to the students.

Immediately there were looks of horror and bewilderment on their faces, as they wondered why I would have to shoot my horses.

Frank Mazurek
Ithaca, New York

My ninth grade health class was full of fun and lively teens who always wanted to know my business, including my birthday. In joking with the kids, I gave them a phony date.

Several weeks later, they threw a surprise birthday party—for me!

I couldn't have been more surprised, of course, because it wasn't my birthday. But I had to play along, since the kids had planned a wonderful dance, decorated a cake, and brought in a wide assortment of homemade goodies.

I will never forget this class and the wonderful memory they gave me.

And, no, I never told them that we had the wrong day.

Joan Forseth
Tacoma, Washington

Since retiring from teaching high school, I sometimes sub in an elementary school. On one occasion, a little girl told me that I looked like Santa Claus.

"No, I don't," I replied.

"Yes, you do," she insisted.

Just because I had a red nose and white beard, I told her, didn't mean I looked like Santa Claus, because Santa has a big belly.

Looking me over from head to foot, she proclaimed, "You're getting there!"

Don Bamberger
Port Washington, Wisconsin

"My friend Edward is bilingual. He can talk to boys and girls."

Need more laughs? Check out Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans, *a book based on "In the Light Lane." $6.95 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library. Stock #1880-X-00-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.*

Landmark Laughs

My third grade class was studying landforms. When I asked for examples, one student said, "Hills."

Another student raised her hand, and when I called on her, she said, "Wal-Marts."

Janet Stoffel
Lewisville, Ohio

A small group of students had been busily and happily working on an elaborate building in the block area of our kindergarten room. It was a stunning piece of architecture, and the students proudly pointed out that they had used every block in the center.

One little guy leaned over from the adjoining area and noted, "That reminds me of the Entire State Building."

Denise Rubenstein
Huntington Woods, Michigan

John Paul, one of my kindergartners, asked me for my address and phone number.

The next day, his mother sent me a note: "John Paul wanted to 'trick or treat' you, so I asked him why he had only brought home your phone number.

"He answered, 'Mrs. Stamper lives at the post office in a box.'"

Ruth Stamper
Cosmopolis, Washington

During a trivia game, my second graders came across a question that asked, "What country did pizza come from?"

I got lots of funny answers, but the best was from a student who hesitantly raised her hand and guessed, "Pizzylvania?"

Gretchen Ek
Vancouver, Washington

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today,* 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, Fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org.

Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Remains of the **Day**

Nancy Lane

After 34 years of classroom adventures, Connecticut science teacher **Louis Tremblay** is experiencing a scientist's greatest thrill—discovery.

As a volunteer on an Earthwatch dinosaur dig in Montana last summer, Tremblay found a rib bone of what scientists believe could be the largest Tyrannosaurus rex on record.

"It was exciting to find something," he says. "We didn't know it would be that significant."

The average T. rex's jaws measure a fearsome five feet long. Tremblay's discovery weighs in with a seven-foot pair of choppers. And many specimens are still waiting to be unearthed.

Last fall, Tremblay raced west to help with an emergency evacuation of the site after some of the bones were stolen. The FBI recovered the missing fossils.

Tremblay spends his summers doing research, so that he can give his students at Avon High School a real-world look into the work of scientists.

"It's important to gain experience in the field to share with students," he notes. "I use the experience as a teaching opportunity. I explain the danger involved in a dinosaur dig, how much hard work it is, and the excitement of discovery."

The find has brought Tremblay national media coverage and invitations for speaking engagements, but his summer is already booked—he'll be back at the site to dig some more.

A Bowl of **Cherry**

As a child in Georgia and as a Tuskeegee Institute student, **Shirley Cherry** says, "I was immersed in my culture. I knew I came from something."

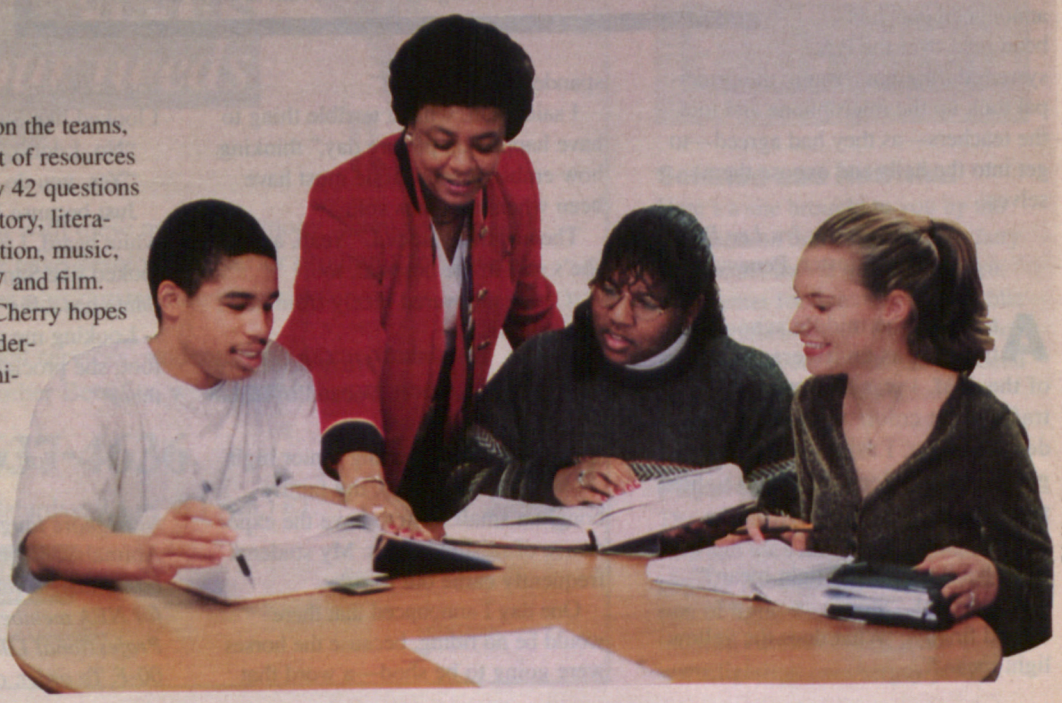
So when Cherry, a teacher and librarian at Portsmouth High School in Rhode Island, encountered an African-American student who didn't recognize the name Booker T. Washington, she knew she had to act.

Cherry created an annual Black History Bowl, where three-member teams from local high schools compete for cash based on their answers to such questions as "Who was the first Black to win a Nobel Prize?"

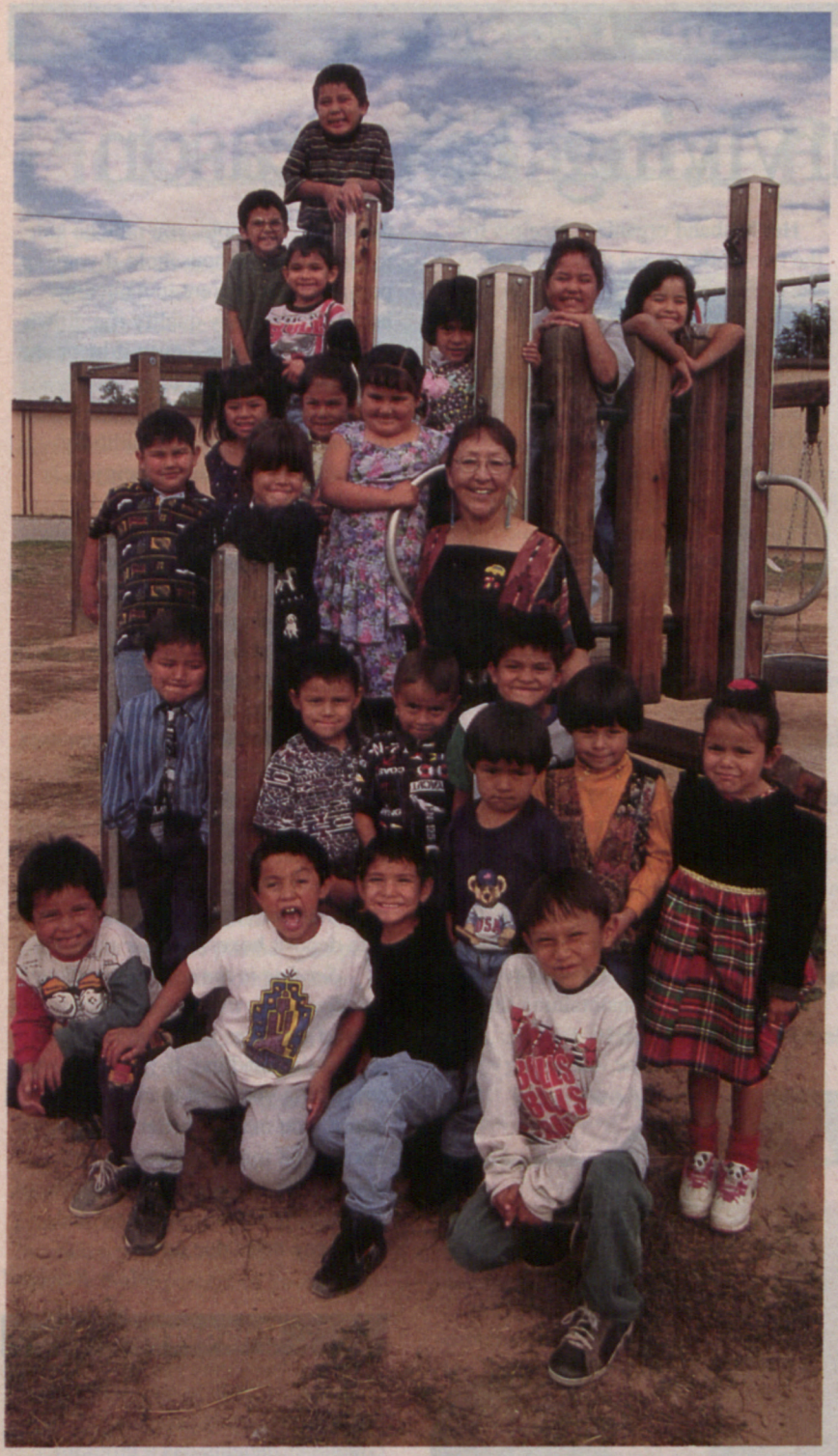
Early in the school year, while students vie for a slot on the teams, Cherry distributes a list of resources from which she'll draw 42 questions in the categories of history, literature, science and invention, music, politics, sports, and TV and film.

Through the Bowl, Cherry hopes to promote cultural understanding in her predominantly white school system.

"It's just as important for majority people to understand the culture of minorities as it is for minorities to understand their own culture," she says.



Eric Huard



Don Stevenson

Teaching from the **Heart**

She has traveled the world, but Arizona teacher **Kellamay Kelly**'s heart remains on the reservation where she grew up—and where she now keeps tradition alive for her students.

With emphasis on Navajo cultural values, Kelly teaches—in Navajo and English—13 kindergartners and nine first graders in the two-room Sawmill Elementary School.

"I will stay here as long as I live and teach," she says. "The need is greater here, and I know I can really make a difference."

When Kelly was six, she went to boarding school, where she was forbidden to speak her native language or wear customary clothes.

"I was once told that my traditional ways were ways of the devil," she notes.

The experience compelled Kelly to commit her life to educating Navajo children and others about the culture. That mission has led her to lecture in Australia, Israel, and Finland.

And now the seeds she is sowing are beginning to grow.

"Oh, how it warms my heart," she says of two students fluent in Navajo and English.

Man on the **Mountain**

When dawn breaks on Nevada's Mt. Charleston, 79-year-old **Earl Lundy** will be right where he's been every school day without fail for the past 17 years—getting Mt. Charleston Elementary School ready for the students and staff.

"I just like to work with children, that's what keeps me going," explains Lundy, who took over the support staff job from his wife when she retired in 1981.

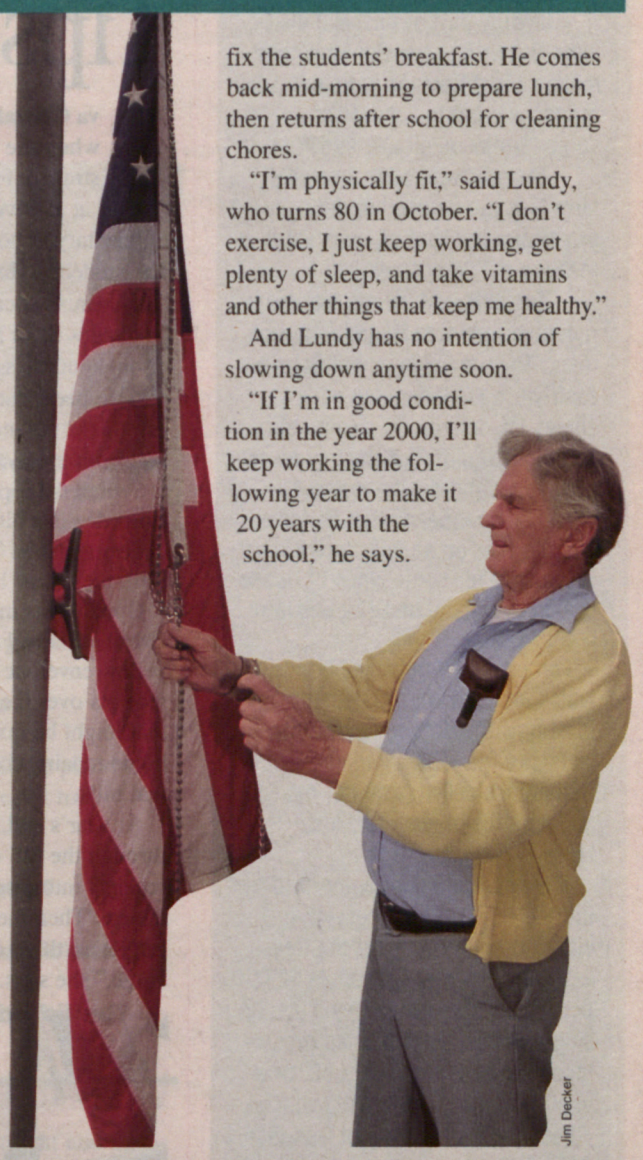
With just 22 students and three other staff, Lundy says he must be a "jack of all trades" to maintain the right learning environment.

Lundy, who lives on the mountain, is in and out of the school throughout the day, arriving early to turn on the heat, plow snow, and fix the students' breakfast. He comes back mid-morning to prepare lunch, then returns after school for cleaning chores.

"I'm physically fit," said Lundy, who turns 80 in October. "I don't exercise, I just keep working, get plenty of sleep, and take vitamins and other things that keep me healthy."

And Lundy has no intention of slowing down anytime soon.

"If I'm in good condition in the year 2000, I'll keep working the following year to make it 20 years with the school," he says.



Jim Decker

Making **Headlines**

As a language arts teacher, **Marilyn Graham Dysart** understands the power of the written word. As a publisher, she knows how to use that power.

Dysart, who teaches at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa, and her husband own Graham Dysart & Associates, a publishing company that has launched three monthly magazines.

"I like to sneak my pro-education views in and influence the community," she says.

Her editorials helped get a local equipment levy passed—a boon to her school.

In a "very well received" cover story last year, Dysart explored "The All-Out Assault on Public Education in the Hawkeye State."

After selling the magazines to other publishing companies, Dysart remains on their rosters as a writer—and a voice for public schools.

Steve Pope

Money

Decisions, Decisions

Coming to Terms

Taxes may be everyone's least favorite part of financial planning. But proper tax planning can make a big difference in how much money you get to keep. Here are some terms you should know:

- **Tax advantaged** is a catchall term that can be used to describe practically any kind of investment. It means nothing specific.
- **Tax deferred** means that current taxes are not due on an investment. The money in annuities and cash-value life insurance policies enjoys tax deferral on investment earnings. You do not pay any taxes until you withdraw the money.
- **Tax free** means that no taxes are due ever on an investment. That is the case for some types of bonds issued by federal and state governments.

For example, municipal bonds, which are issued by state, city, or local governments to pay for projects, are free of federal taxes. Sometimes called "munis," many are also free of state and local taxes.

The new Roth IRA, authorized by the 1997 Taxpayer Relief Act, provides an opportunity for tax-free earnings. You may contribute $2,000 per year in after-tax money if you're single and have an adjusted gross income of less than $95,000, or if you're married filing jointly with an adjusted gross income of less than $150,000.

- **Tax credit** refers to a tax break that you subtract dollar for dollar from your tax liability.
- **Pretax** means that you may use money for some purpose before you pay tax on it—and sometimes you never have to pay tax. That's the case with money you may spend on certain health care or dependent care needs.

You also are permitted to put pretax money into a 403(b) plan, a 401(k) plan, or a deductible IRA. When you put money into a retirement plan at work, your contribution is subtracted from your salary before your salary is taxed.

But this retirement money will be taxable when you withdraw it. And if you withdraw it before age 59 1/2, in most cases you'll pay a 10 percent penalty.

Still, using pretax money to fund a retirement plan is one of the very best ways to save on taxes—at the same time that you build up a retirement nest egg.

Tips for Surviving Tax Season

Eva Gonzalez gets keyed up when she talks about a new strategy for teaching her third graders at Eastwood Heights Elementary School in El Paso, Texas. The students—half English speakers, half Spanish speakers—will use both languages in all academic subjects throughout the school year.

"I've been teaching for 23 years, and this is the most exciting program I've been involved in," Gonzalez says.

Switch the topic to taxes, and Gonzalez is a bit less animated. That's understandable. Taxes are hardly fun. Still, they must be done—and soon.

Gonzalez is methodical about hers. Every January 1, she gets out a big, yellow envelope into which she'll toss receipts over the year for expenses that might be tax deductible—travel, home repairs, college costs, and medical bills.

At year's end, Gonzalez sorts through the full envelope, putting the receipts into smaller envelopes by category. "Then the neatest part is when I turn everything over to my husband, Jorge," she says.

Her husband organizes receipts for the two of them, and they head off to see their accountant, typically in March.

"But we never send the return in until the very last minute on April 15," Gonzalez says.

The Gonzalez family isn't alone. About half of all taxpayers mail their returns during the first two weeks of April, says the Internal Revenue Service. For many, the time between now and then will be hectic.

If you're rushing to complete your tax forms, be careful not to make these common mistakes:

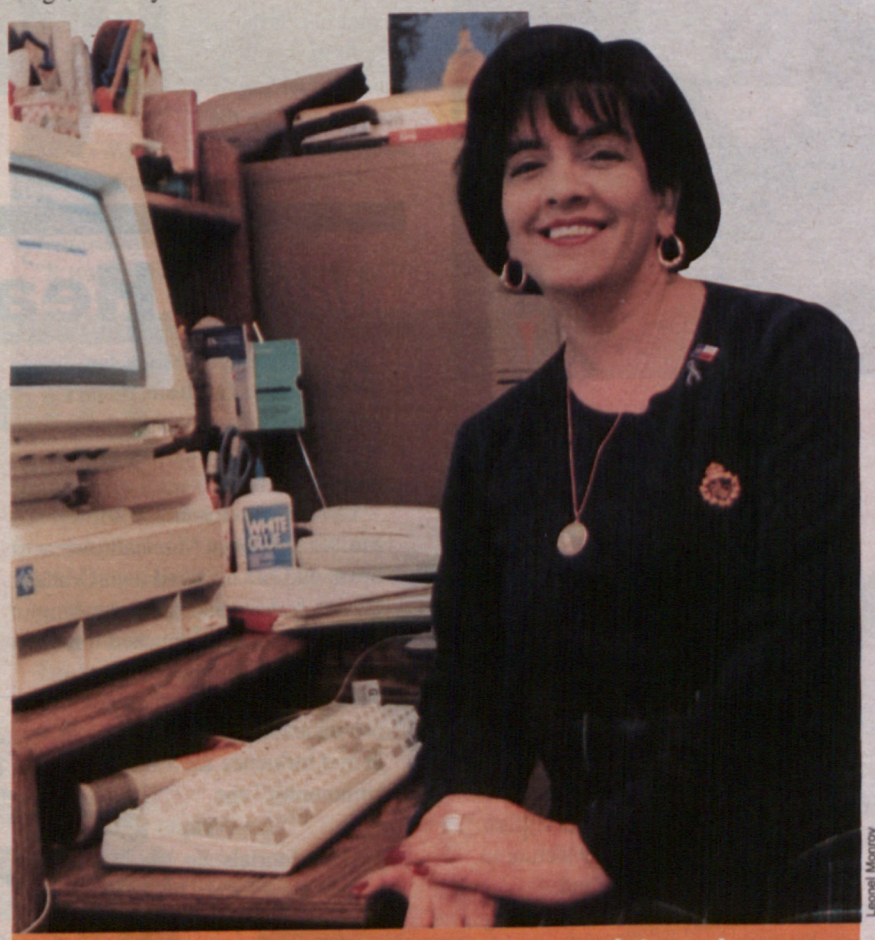
- *Neglecting to file as head of household.* An unmarried or legally separated person who provides a home for a dependent may be able to use the head of household filing status rather than single status—and the tax savings can be substantial.

To qualify, you must be single, the dependent must, in most cases, be a relative, and you must pay more than half of the cost of maintaining the home.

The rule has some interesting twists. For example, you may be able to claim head of household if you support an elderly parent in a nursing home. Or you may qualify if a grown child lives at home—even if he or she holds down a good job.

- *Failing to report* all *of your income.* Most taxpayers faithfully record the income from their job, which is typically stated on a W-2 form. But many neglect interest, dividends, or income from freelance work, like tutoring or consulting. This income is reported on Form 1099, then sent to you and to the IRS, which matches it against what you list on your tax form. Be careful.
- *Not deducting business expenses.* If you have any self-employment income, which you report on Schedule C, you are entitled to deduct expenses against that income. That might include briefcases, calculators, credit card membership fees, business gifts, safe deposit boxes, and car mileage.
- *Sending in the return even though you don't have time to finish it properly.* Lots of mistakes are made in rushing to beat the deadline. If you don't have everything you need to complete your return, you may be better off filing Form 4868 for an extension. That gives you until August 15 to finish up, although you must estimate—and pay—any taxes due now.

—Mary Rowland



Leonel Monroy

Texas teacher Eva Gonzalez collects receipts and paperwork for her tax return all year long—but, like most people, waits until April to file.

Resources

It's not too early to start thinking about *next* year's tax planning. NEA Member Benefits has a program that can work for you.

- With the NEA Valuebuilder® Annuity, you can substantially reduce your current tax liability while saving for retirement.
- If you expect a sizable tax refund, look to the NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund.
- Other investment options include the NEA-Sponsored GoldCertificate® CD and the NEA-Sponsored FDIC-Insured Money Market Account offered by MBNA America Bank. Both offer interest rates that consistently beat or match the best rates ranked in *Money* magazine and are also available as IRAs.

To find out more, call Member Benefits at 800/637-4636, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday-Friday, or 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, ET.

Eye on Retirement

Picking a Financial Planner

If you're thinking of hiring a financial planner, start by making sure you really need one. For instance, if you have trouble saving a dime, or have financial questions that require some technical expertise, or simply aren't comfortable making investment decisions, a planner can help.

How do you find a planner? First, identify several reputable planners in your area. The best sources for references are friends and colleagues with similar incomes and financial goals.

If you don't know anyone who has a planner, call the Institute of Certified Financial Planners (800/282-7526) or the International Association for Financial Planning (800/945-4237) for the names and numbers of planners in your area. Once you have three names, set up initial meetings, which should be free.

Next, conduct a tough interview with each of the planners—and be sure to ask how the planner gets paid.

When it comes to compensation, there are three types of planners:

- Fee-only planners, whom you pay about $80 to $125 an hour plus an annual fee of 1 to 2 percent of your portfolio.
- Fee and commission, or fee-based, planners, who get similar fees plus commissions on investments and insurance policies they sell—typically equal to 3 to 5 percent of your portfolio annually.
- Commission-only planners, who get paid only when you buy investments or insurance from them—again, about 3 to 5 percent.

One method of compensation isn't necessarily better than another, but if the planner accepts commissions, find out which investments he tends to sell. If he talks a lot about one particular product, you're probably dealing with someone who's more interested in selling than planning.

Next, find out about the planner's experience. Don't hire anyone who has been a planner for less than three years. Ask planners about the income levels and portfolio sizes of their typical clients. You should work with a planner who tends to deal with people whose finances are similar to yours.

Finally, check to be sure the planner has a clean record. Call your state securities department and the federal Securities and Exchange Commission (202/942-8088) to see if the planner has been disciplined by either agency.

If a planner's firm belongs to the National Association of Securities Dealers, phone NASD (800/289-9999) to see if there have been any judgments against it, if complaints against it have resulted in arbitration awards to the complainant, or if there are any pending disciplinary proceedings.

Worksheet

Evaluating Financial Planners

If you're in the market for a financial planner, take a copy of this questionnaire with you to the initial interview.

1. **How many years of experience have you had?** (Look for a minimum of three years.)
2. **What is your educational background and credentials?** (Look for designations like "certified financial planner" or "chartered financial consultant.")
3. **What is your area of expertise?**
4. **How do you keep up with current trends in your field?**
5. **What types of clients do you usually handle?**
6. **Can you provide references from clients?** (If the planner says no, assume that he or she has no long-term clients or can't trust them to be complimentary.)
7. **How long has your company been in business?**
8. **What other financial professionals do you work with?**
9. **How are your fees determined? How will I be billed?**

Educated Investor

Q: Investing money abroad was on my list of resolutions for 1998, but now I have cold feet. What should I do?

A: You're not the only one with cold feet. Your question is being debated at the top levels of financial circles.

Asset allocation—or diversifying your money into various pots like domestic and international stocks and bonds—has been the watchword for professional investors for at least a decade.

But overseas markets have lagged markets in the United States for four years now. And 1997 was a particularly difficult year. Not only did foreign markets lag for most of the year, but they became extremely volatile in the last quarter.

The lesson from 1997? That global investing is "bunk," concludes Roger Lowenstein in his "Intrinsic Value" column in the *Wall Street Journal*. He says he'll keep his money at home, where he understands what he is investing in.

Besides, some professionals say, it's easy enough to get global exposure by investing in large multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, General Motors, or Gillette.

Still, a diversification argument can be made for investing overseas. One option is to buy a well-established mutual fund that invests in developed overseas markets rather than in the emerging countries that were so badly hit last year. Diversification always makes sense.

—NEA Member Benefits

Financial Finds

Financial Planning

The International Association for Financial Planning (IAFP) offers a series of free "Mastering Money" brochures on a variety of topics, including funding a college education, organizing your estate, protecting yourself against fraud, and preparing financially for marriage or having a child. To request copies call IAFP's Consumer Referral Program at 800/945-4237 or go to the Web at www.iafp.org.

Taxing Questions

Interested in finding out what your tax liability will be this April 15? Then log on to accounting firm Ernst & Young's Web site, at www.ey.com/tax, where you can calculate how much you're likely to owe the IRS under the provisions of the 1997 Tax Act.

The site also lists the 50 most overlooked deductions and the 25 most common mistakes on tax forms.

If you're considering investing in a new Roth IRA, you can download the firm's new Retirement Contribution Analyzer software, which compares contributions to a taxable account with various tax-deferred accounts.

Credit Repair

Rebuilding Good Credit, available free from Consumer Action, offers advice on paying off debt, avoiding credit card scams, reestablishing credit, and more. For a copy, send your request and a self-addressed, stamped, business-size envelope to Consumer Action-RGC, 717 Market St., Suite 310, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Taking Stock

If you're looking for timely information on a specific stock, try Yahoo Finance at quote.yahoo.com, one of the fastest, most concise sources for stock quotes and company research on the Internet.

Simply type in a stock's ticker symbol, and Yahoo will display the day's opening trade price, the previous day's close, the latest trade, and as many as 10 recent news stories about the company.

You can get additional stats—such as dividend payments and price-to-earnings ratios—with a few clicks of the mouse. Yahoo Finance also maintains connections to thousands of other financial sites.

NEA Elections Report

The Campaign Revenue and Expenses of 1997 Candidates for NEA Office

NEA Standing Rule 10.E provides as follows:
Campaign Expenses. No portion of dues money collected at the local, regional, state, or national level shall be used to promote the candidacy of any individual for an NEA office.

Using forms provided by the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules, each candidate shall file a preliminary report of campaign revenues and expenses, including projected revenues and expenses, with the committe prior to the opening of nominations at the Representative Assembly. A final report, on the forms provided by the committee, must be filed with the committee no later than thirty (30) days following certification of the election results. The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to any nominations or elections, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report of campaign revenues and expenditures shall be printed in an appropriate NEA publication for inspection by any member.

The following reports were filed in a timely manner and are printed pursuant to Rule 10.E. Candidates are listed below by office and by alphabetical order within each office.

Candidates for Secretary-Treasurer

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 4,882.80
Individuals within the state	$ 8,828.55	Mailing	428.73
Groups within the state	679.86	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	1,664.10
Individuals outside the state	3,543.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	5,944.59
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	9,101.00	Giveaways	7,743.54
Donations in kind	4,133.05	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	3,697.28
Total	$26,285.46	Total	$24,361.04

Signed: **Kathleen H. Bell**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 5,502.00
Individuals within the state	$ 5,444.00	Mailing	880.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	8,664.00
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	3,371.00
Individuals outside the state	14,121.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	5,125.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	6,090.00	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	934.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	3,902.00
Total	$26,589.00	Total	$27,444.00

Signed: **Dennis Van Roekel**

Candidates for Executive Committee

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$12,865.00
Individuals within the state	$ 3,236.00	Mailing	1,280.00
Groups within the state	10,000.00	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	380.00	Hospitality and entertainment	850.00
Individuals outside the state	2,432.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	407.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	2,623.00	Giveaways	822.00
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	1,462.00
Total	$18,671.00	Total	$17,686.00

Signed: **Marilyn Cross**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 2,301.83
Individuals within the state	$ 7,526.70	Mailing	2,345.85
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	143.40
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	128.13
Individuals outside the state	4,116.55	Campaign Committee Expenses	4,550.68
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	2,695.70	Giveaways	1,016.58
Donations in kind	500.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	1,609.42
Total	$14,838.95	Total	$12,095.89

Signed: **Dan Sakota**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 6,050.63
Individuals within the state	$ 1,455.00	Mailing	517.99
Groups within the state	1,735.00	Other media materials	2,680.40
Groups outside the state	4,830.66	Hospitality and entertainment	1,343.01
Individuals outside the state	1,015.00	Campaign Committee Expenses (Includes cand. travel)	5,865.30
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	5,644.00	Giveaways	523.84
Donations in kind (includes frequent flyer tickets)	4,124.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	433.81
Total	$18,803.66	Total	$17,414.98

Signed: **Iona A. Holloway**

Candidates for NEA Director, ESP At-Large

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 0
Individuals within the state	$ 0	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	0
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
Total	$ 0	Total	$ 0

Signed: **Mark Cavendish**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$153.50
Individuals within the state	$ 181.00	Mailing	12.80
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	29.52
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	130.00
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	125.98
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	440.00	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	169.20
Total	$ 621.00	Total	$621.00

Signed: **Yvonne A. Henning**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 384.23
Individuals within the state	$427.02	Mailing	49.73
Groups within the state	136.00	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	40.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	592.78
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	139.00	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	32.90
Total	$742.02	Total	$1,059.64

Signed: **Jeanette Marquardt**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 270.00
Individuals within the state	$300.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	200.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	650.00	Giveaways	90.00
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	460.00
Total	$950.00	Total	$1,020.00

Signed: **Eddie Middleton**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$527.00
Individuals within the state	$225.00	Mailing	16.00
Groups within the state	200.00	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	100.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	0
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	130.00	Giveaways	40.00
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	125.00
Total	$655.00	Total	$708.00

Signed: **Jimmie Myers**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 940.81
Individuals within the state	$1,423.00	Mailing	96.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	168.80
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	428.94
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	516.00	Giveaways	210.75
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	273.60
Total	$1,939.00	Total	$2,118.90

Signed: **Rosemary Riley**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$175.00
Individuals within the state	$630.00	Mailing	32.00
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	75.00
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	6.00	Campaign Committee Expenses	335.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	120.00
Donations in kind	100.00	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
Total	$736.00	Total	$737.00

Signed: **Gail M. Rasmussen**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 583.58
Individuals within the state	$1,249.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	0	Other media materials	23.27
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	51.86
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	330.96
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	180.70
Total	$1,249.00	Total	$1,170.37

Signed: **Sandra L. Schaller**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$ 989.00
Individuals within the state	$1,016.00	Mailing	40.00
Groups within the state	200.00	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	341.00
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0	Giveaways	0
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	200.00
Total	$1,216.00	Total	$1,570.00

Signed: **Tim Smith**

SOURCES OF REVENUE		EXPENSES	
Cash		Printing	$106.50
Individuals within the state	$ 45.00	Mailing	0
Groups within the state	155.00	Other media materials	0
Groups outside the state	0	Hospitality and entertainment	0
Individuals outside the state	0	Campaign Committee Expenses	93.50
Income from raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	200.00	Giveaways	200.00
Donations in kind	0	Raffle, lottery, or similar fund-raising activity	0
Total	$400.00	Total	$400.00

Signed: **Nancy G. Toombs**

My Turn

Trying To Play by the Rules

A chemistry teacher fights for the right to fail a student athlete who earned a failing grade.

By Don McComb

In the second quarter last year, John* did badly on several chemistry quizzes and didn't complete a significant number of other assignments. I issued an interim progress report that was sent to his home, then, seeing no improvement, I gave John a failing grade for the quarter.

The chemistry grade, it turns out, was John's second failing grade that quarter. By the rules, he was barred from extracurricular activities until his grades improved.

But, in this case, the rules didn't apply. You see, John's a star athlete, and, I later found out, a state championship was pending, college scouts were coming, and scholarships were on the line.

John's parent, a principal in the school system, claimed not to have received the interim report and pressured my principal to change the grade.

My principal put pressure on me (to no avail), then changed John's grade himself. John got an incomplete. Three hours later, he was participating in the state championship.

For the past year, I've been fighting the decision. It's been an uphill struggle, one that still has no resolution.

I started with a call to my union, the Montgomery County Education Association. Although our contract doesn't cover issues like this, an MCEA committee of teachers that meets regularly with the principal brought the issue up. The principal held to his position.

I then went to the assistant superintendent for school administration, who denied my request for a hearing, saying, of all things, I had no right to appeal the principal's decision.

Next, with able representation from MCEA, I filed a formal administrative complaint with the school system. To no one's surprise, my appeal was denied at all three levels.

I then asked the County Board of Education for a hearing. It's my understanding that the Board met at least three times on the issue, then voted to deny my request.

While all of this was going on, John completed the missing assignments. I recalculated his second quarter mark as directed and submitted the now passing grade to the registrar.

Unwilling to drop the issue, I got legal advice from the Maryland State Teachers Association and appealed to the state Board of Education. And that's where things stand right now.

I can only hope that the members of that board recognize the significance and implications of the issue and grant my request for a hearing. It would be a sad day if I have to go to court to be heard.

This kind of thing probably happens all the time, and I confess I feel a bit like Don Quixote tilting at windmills. But too much is at stake to stop now.

The integrity of academic standards, competitive athletics, and the public school system is on the line. What message are we sending to our students—and the public—when school officials put sports above academics, parental satisfaction above honor, and silence above the right to a fair hearing?

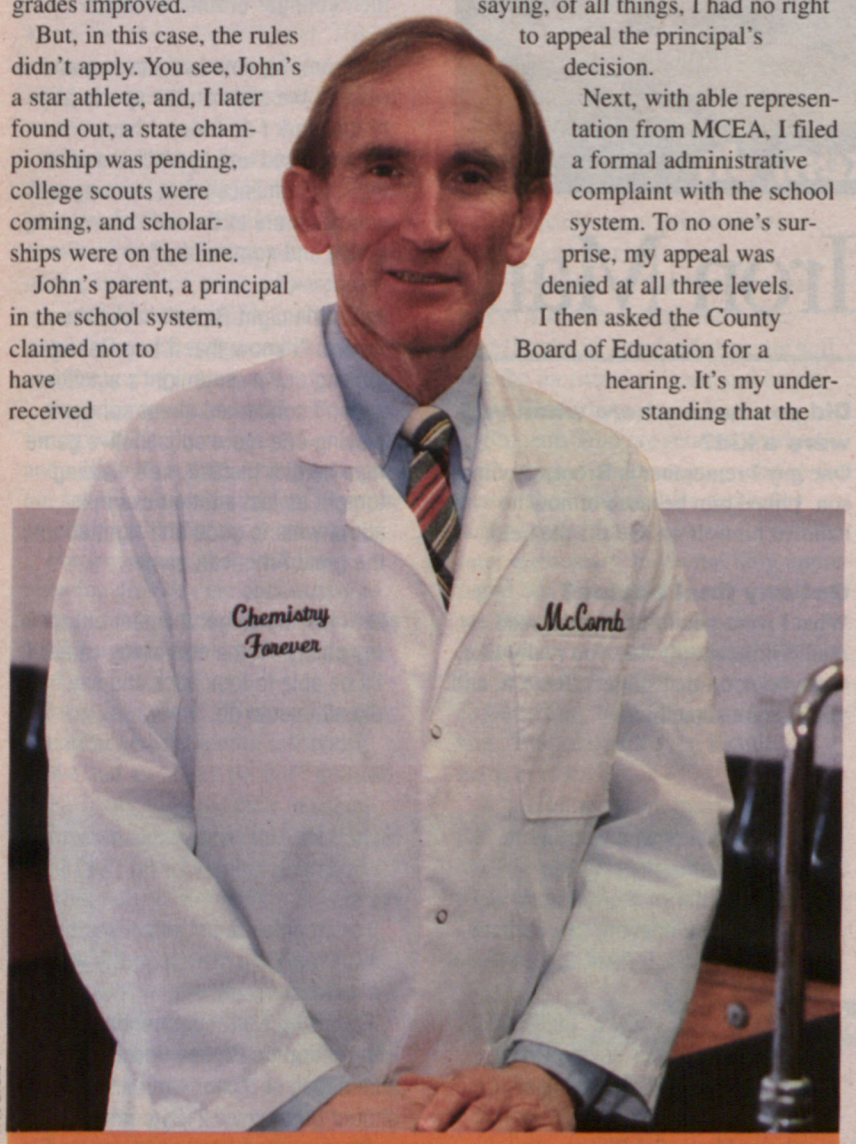
In commenting on the Latrell Sprewell incident in *Sports Illustrated*, the Reverend Jesse Jackson wrote recently about the consequences of allowing athletes to play by different rules.

"The road to an incident like [Sprewell hitting his coach]," Jackson wrote, "begins the first time an *F* is turned to a *C* for a star athlete, when local prosecutors pass on a case that would have landed a nonathlete in jail, when high school and college coaches are not expected to have a broad role in the academic life of the schools that hire them, when communities choose to build spanking new stadiums rather than rebuild crumbling elementary schools."

I don't want to go down that road. My decision to say "no" and challenge the decisions of the principal, superintendent, and board of education on this matter may be the most important contribution I ever make.

Where and when this issue will end, I don't know. But I still have faith that justice and fairness will ultimately triumph somewhere, sometime—for teachers and students everywhere.

* Not his real name.



Joe Di Dio

NEA member Don McComb teaches chemistry at Gaithersburg High School and at Montgomery College in Maryland. He's received national recognition for his financial support of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

You Said It

Bill Fischer, editor

I remember the first reader reaction to the January *NEA Today*. It came by phone, just a few days before Christmas. The caller was a California member, upset over the cover headline about the "secret to teaching reading."

This NEA member wasn't just calling for herself, she said, but on behalf of other colleagues—all of whom were thinking about pitching their copies of *NEA Today* in the trash, all of whom say they, too, know how to teach reading well.

Our conversation soon shifted off the headline to the content of the story itself, and, in the end, we found ourselves on the same page, talking about new ways of getting kids to read and become lifelong readers.

Dissatisfied as this member was with the headline, she was happy that we'd focused on the topic of reading. We found common ground.

Phone calls like this are just one way we get your responses to each new issue of *NEA Today*. In recent years, more and more NEA members are reaching us via E-mail.

I particularly like communicating via E-mail, because one E-mail message can quite often prompt more E-mail—and a meaningful give-and-take on whatever issue is at hand.

Still, despite the growing popularity of E-mail, most comments we receive from *NEA Today* readers come via regular mail, with many, though not as many as four or five years ago, handwritten. The rest are right off computer printers or, every so often, from a trusty typewriter.

Letters often arrive with attachments. Sometimes readers will attach some new piece of research related to an *NEA Today* article or a poem or a newspaper clip.

In the end, it really doesn't matter how you choose to communicate with us. Just know one thing. We read what you write. We listen to what you say, in person and over the phone. So talk to us. We want to hear from you.

Bill Fischer

Meet

Cal Ripken cares almost as much about reading as he does about baseball.

Just about everyone in America knows Cal Ripken as the man who broke Lou Gehrig's record for consecutive games played. A growing number of people also know him as a man deeply dedicated to literacy.

For several years now, while Ripken has been turning up for work every day on the baseball diamond, he's also been quietly funding a literacy program in Baltimore. In 1997, Ripken took his literacy support efforts "on the road." He provided funding for several literacy programs throughout the United States and Canada.

So when NEA asked, Ripken jumped at the chance to be a co-chair of Read Across America, the March 2 celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday. (For more on Read Across America, see page 7.)

To help kick off the celebration, Ripken visited his niece's middle school in Havre de Grace, Maryland. At a schoolwide assembly, he challenged students to join him in reading tongue-twisters from Dr. Seuss's Oh Say Can You Say? *(photo at right) and participate in Read Across America.*

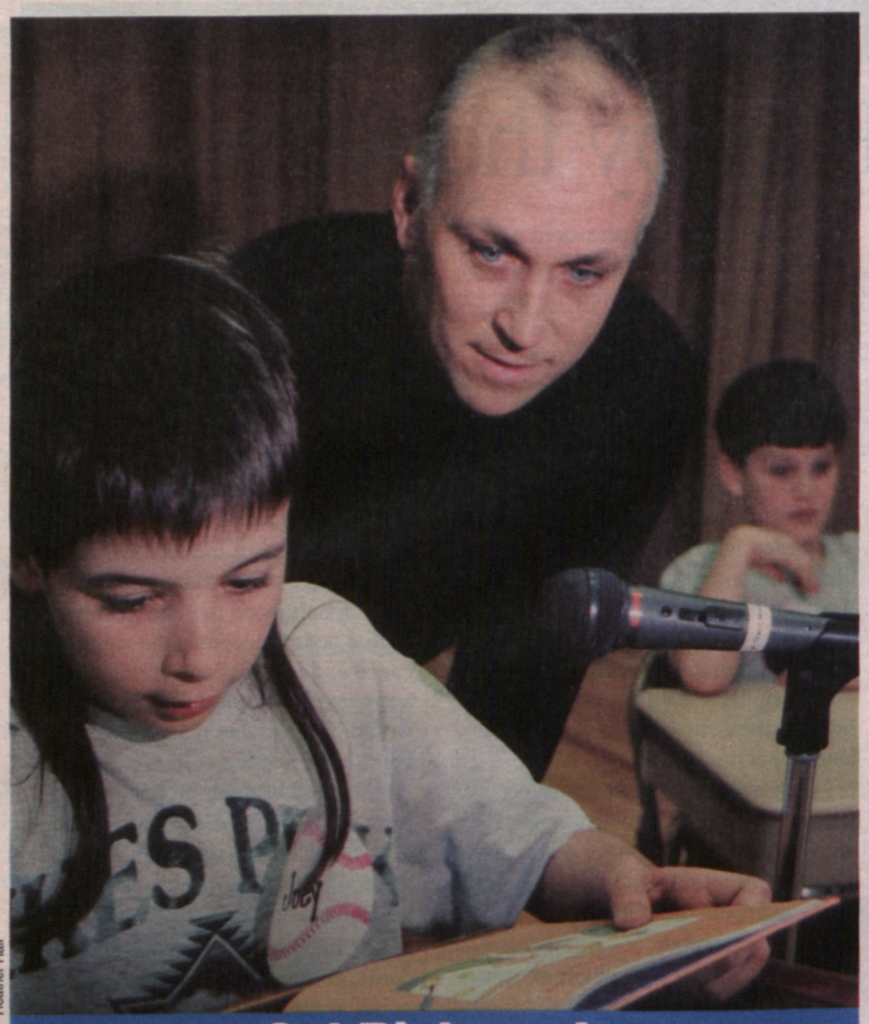
Afterwards, Ripken met separately with a small group of students to talk about reading and answer their questions. Here are a few of the kids' questions and the Oriole star's answers.

Do you read a lot?
I read with my children just about every night, and I'll be the first one to tell you that reading can be fun.

What do you read?
I used to read books about baseball when I was growing up. That was all I wanted to read. Now I read a lot of history and non-fiction. I'm at the point in my life where my kids [ages four and eight] are asking a lot of questions. I want to have answers. I read to be a good dad.

How will you participate in Read Across America?
I'm going to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday reading with a group of children on the dugout steps in Florida before a spring training game.

Were you nervous trying to break Lou Gehrig's record?
I wasn't nervous at first because I didn't set out to break the record. I was nervous about what the celebration was going to be like when I started getting close. But I was happy with how it turned out.



Heather Hall

Cal Ripken, Jr.

Literacy's Iron Man

Are you going to try to get to 3,000 games?
My goal never was to play in as many games in a row as I have. Who knows how long the streak will last? If I'm able to play, and the manager wants to put me in the game, and I can help the team, then that's what I'm going to do.

After a game, does your wife wash your dirty uniforms?
No. The team has staff who wash our uniforms.

Do you have any advice for kids who dream of being professional athletes?
My advice to kids is to try all sports and all positions. By playing a lot of different sports and different positions at a young age, you'll be able to find out where your passion is. And don't forget that it's supposed to be fun.

How do you feel when children call you a hero?
I don't see myself as a hero, but I try to watch my actions and set a good example.

Did you have a hero when you were a kid?
One guy I remember is Brooks Robinson. I liked him because of how he handled himself on and off the field.

Got any final advice?
What I want you to do is read, read, read. Think about what you really like. Get a book on that subject. Read it, and you'll learn something.

The Quotable Cal

- "Kids reduce the game to its most basic level, and they remind me why it is I love baseball so much . . . . My kids are the greatest thing that ever happened to me. I think kids are the secret to life."
- "Part of being a good student is practicing. It is going to school every day, doing your homework every day, and being a part of the school community."
- "I was under the assumption that everyone knew how to read. It surprised me so much that there's a hole in that many people's education."
- "Being a good reader has the potential to take you on all kinds of adventures. . . .No matter what you do, you are going to have to read."
- "I tell kids to make sure they take 10 or 15 minutes a day to read with their younger brother or sister."
- "From the time I was young and reading the stats on the sports page to the work I do today, I have always loved and appreciated reading. I'm convinced that learning and education are at the core of a strong family and community."
- On the night Ripken broke the record: "I know that if Lou Gehrig is looking down on tonight's activities, he isn't concerned about someone playing one more consecutive game than he did. Instead, he's viewing tonight as just another example about what is good and right about the great American game."
- "I just try to get the best out of my ability. At the end of my career, I'll be able to look back and say I did all I could do."

Resources

- NEA members who want more information about the Ripken Learning Center or the Kelly and Cal Ripken, Jr., Foundation, can write to Baltimore Reads, 5 Read St., Baltimore, MD 21202.
- *The Only Way I Know.* Cal Ripken, Jr., with Mike Bryan. Viking Press, 1997, 320 pp., $22.95. Available in paperback in April.
- *Count Me In.* Cal Ripken, Jr., with Greg Brown. Taylor Publishing Company, 1995, 40 pp., $14.95. For kids ages 9-12.
- *Cal Ripken, Jr.: Quiet Hero.* Lois Nicholson. Tidewater Publishers, 1995 (2nd edition), 128 pp., $13.95. For kids in grades 4-8.
- For a complete list of books about Cal Ripken, do a search on the Web at www.amazon.com.
- Fans who want comprehensive information on Ripken, including audiotapes of recent interviews, should go to www.2131.com.
- It's never too late to get involved in NEA's Read Across America. For more information and to pledge to participate, go to www.nea.org/readacross. Also see page 7 of this issue.

Debate

Can Retention Be Good For a Student?

Yes

Gwendolyn Malone, a fifth grade teacher in rural Clarke County, Virginia, is president of the 133-member Clarke County Education Association. A teacher for five years, Malone now works at Cooley Elementary. She can be reached at maloneg@clarke.k12.va.us.

A child recently reached my fifth grade classroom without the ability to read even at a first grade level.

The child had been systematically promoted with his peers for years in the hopes that he would eventually pick up the necessary reading skills.

Every other student in the class knew the child couldn't read. The embarrassment was so painful the child cried every single time I called on him.

If this child had been retained at the primary grade level, he might have learned to read. He might have avoided years of humiliation. And he might have been more prepared for upper elementary skills, including risk-taking, guessing, context clueing, and the use of prior knowledge.

Social promotion set this child up for repeated failure, low self-esteem, and a high risk of becoming a dropout statistic. Retention might have prepared this child for academic success.

For most struggling children, retention provides the opportunity to refresh, relearn, and acquire new skills that help them move to the next grade level.

Most important, if framed properly, retention gives students self-confidence and an "I can do this" attitude that's likely to boost their academic achievement for years to come.

But if grade retention is to be successful, educators must:

- Stop sitting back and hoping against all odds that children, if promoted, will eventually absorb the skills they need. It won't happen.
- Nip the problem in the bud by retaining students early in their school careers.

Kids get an essential educational foundation in kindergarten, first, and second grade. If they don't have a grasp of the basics at this age, they shouldn't be permitted to move on.

I'd like to call these three grades simply "primary grades," stop grading students in them, and instead provide a list of skills each child must master and knowledge they must acquire before advancing to third grade.

- Establish a way of transitioning students into the next higher grade when they're ready.

If children have mastered third grade skills or if retained children have "caught up," then they shouldn't have to remain in an unproductive or unchallenging setting. They should be moved within that academic year to an academically appropriate or age-appropriate level.

When kids see that there's a way out of a situation they don't like, they'll take it. Retained students will see the incentive to learn and be promoted with their peers.

Students who are retained early on with support and nurturing tend to feel better about themselves and enjoy school more than those who reach the later elementary levels not only unprepared but ashamed that other students are aware of their deficiencies.

Students who are promoted without the academic skills they need become embarrassed, hurt, angry, and defensive. That makes it even harder for them to catch up.

It would be easier, more academically sound, and even more economical to prevent dropouts by retaining these children in the primary grades.

Let's give these students what they need—a hand up, not a hand-out.

No

Philip Bowser, recently named the "school psychologist of the year" by the National Association of School Psychologists, is an NEA activist in Roseburg, Oregon. A member of the NEA Today Local Editor Advisory Board, Bowser can be reached at pbowser@orednet.org.

Imagine going to your physician with an illness. The doctor says, "There's an old treatment for your condition. At best, it helps only one in 10 who get it, but no one can predict which one.

"That one person will experience a little bit of relief for a short period of time," the doctor continues, "but then the problem will return. Everyone will have negative side effects, some of which can be severe, some lifelong."

The illness is underachievement. The treatment—if educators practice full disclosure—is grade retention.

It's easy to understand the appeal of holding back a student who fails to meet benchmarks. Retention can take a student from the bottom of a class to somewhere nearer the middle. That seems like progress, doesn't it?

The problem is that students are compared to the grade placement, not to their peers. The students have "caught up" to the wrong group!

Most likely, the learning problems that contributed to the original retention decision will persist, and the retained students, in a year or two, will be back at the bottom of the class.

As a districtwide school psychologist, I follow retained students for a few years. In my experience, grade retention is a dangerous gamble.

But you don't have to take my word for it. The research shows that:

- Retained students rarely make significant academic progress in the retained year.
- First or second graders who show improvement over non-retained, underachieving peers quickly lose that advantage. The two groups soon perform the same academically, but the retained group develops measurable mental health problems.
- A single retention increases a student's probability of dropping out by 21 to 27 percent.
- The stigma of retention damages self-concept and creates a negative attitude toward school to a much greater degree than most educators predict beforehand or recognize later.
- The most common retainee is a non-white male, small of stature, from a low-income family, with parents uninvolved in schooling.
- "Old for grade" adolescents are at increased risk for substance abuse, earlier sexual activity, behavioral problems, and emotional distress.

Those who frame the problem as a choice among grade retention, social promotion, or low academic standards don't see the variety of existing remedies with stronger therapeutic force and fewer side effects.

What if school districts took the cost of extending a student's career an extra year—on average, $5,000—and used the money for effective prevention and remediation programs?

What if teachers had decent class sizes and adequate time to reflect and plan individualized instruction?

What if schools involved parents earlier, gaining their support for additional tutoring, cross-grade groupings, and summer school?

Wouldn't these solutions be more effective than running kids through the same course of instruction that has already proven inadequate?

When parents and teachers decide to retain, they do so in the dark, in spite of ample evidence that they will be adding a significant risk factor to the life of a child. To me, that's not a chance worth taking.

What's Your Opinion?

Can retention be good for a student?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

Has student fundraising gone too far?

The tally on this Debate question from the last issue of *NEA Today*:
83% Yes **17% No**

Marketplace

Employment

Teacher/principal jobs nationwide. SASE to NTC, Box 267, Boston, MA 02117; 617/267-3204.

Teachers & Administrators
Rapidly growing company has openings in private & public charter schools: AZ, MN, IA, TX, MI, NJ, IN, MA (98-99). Competitive salary. Certified or eligible. Elementary teachers and Middle School & High School-Math, Science, Social Studies, English, French, Spanish, Music, Art. Bilingual teachers, French/English, in above certifications for Boston area.
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Books

Discovering Diversity's Divide

Two authors try to make sense of the segregation that still exists in today's schools.

MADE IN AMERICA
Laurie Olsen
"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"
And Other Conversations About Race
BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, PH.D.

"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"
Beverly Tatum. BasicBooks, 270 pp., $24, 800/242-7737.

Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools
Laurie Olsen. The New Press, 276 pp., $25, 800/233-4830.

Why, in the face of increasing diversity, do most Black kids sit together in the cafeteria? Why are most honors classes still disproportionately white? And why is the Hispanic dropout rate nearing 50 percent?

To the authors of two new books, these aren't rhetorical questions. They've got answers, answers that demand your attention, answers that start with racism.

"Cultural racism is like smog in the air," writes professor Beverly Daniel Tatum in *"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?"*

"Sometimes it is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in."

As a result, Tatum says, Black teens congregate to find "support in the face of stress." That's a "positive coping strategy," she believes, not something to fear or try to prevent.

Tatum even suggests that schools could improve "both academic performance and social relationships among students" by giving Black students one period every day just to talk among themselves.

Most of Tatum's ideas aren't nearly as radical. She suggests that educators "expose young people to images of African American academic achievement in their early years," teach white kids to understand their racial identity "without shame," and get students to think critically about racism.

In Made in America, Laurie Olsen writes about the two years she spent observing immigrant students at an urban California high school.

"The grim reality," Olsen concludes, "is that newcomer students who do not speak English are tracked, separated, provided with inadequate materials and poorly trained teachers, and denied access to core content areas."

Harsh charges, yes. But Olsen backs up her conclusions with powerful examples of discrimination and unequal opportunity that ring true.

But in suggesting ways to solve the problem—massive teacher training and hiring programs, more support programs for newcomer students, and more teaching in student's native tongues—Olsen raises tougher questions than the ones she answers.

Will Americans summon the will to spend more—not less—on newcomers? Will President' Clinton's conversation on race include immigrants? Will we, as a society, strive for more than tolerance?

—Stefanie Weiss

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50)This compact book answers your questions about block scheduling. (#2159-2-10-FB)

2 Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans: Fun Tales from NEA Members. ($6.95) Enjoy this heartwarming collection of more than 90 humorous stories from the classroom. (#1880-X-00-FB)

3 The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)

4 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-10-FB)

5 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-10-FB)

6 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) The second title in the Checklist Series offers practical advice to new teachers. (#2151-7-10-FB)

7 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-10-FB)

8 Flirting or Hurting? A Teacher's Guide on Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment in Schools (Grades 6-12). Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) Ways to stop and prevent harassment. (#1864-8-00-FB)

9 Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students. Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) "Bullyproof" your classroom with these teacher-tested lessons. (#1873-7-10-FB)

10 Countdown to the First Day of School. Leo M. Schell & Paul Burden. ($4.50) A must-have checklist for every beginning elementary school teacher. (#2150-9-10-FB)

This month's rankings are based on last month's sales for all books published by the NEA Professional Library, a service for all 2.3 million NEA members financed solely by the sale of books and other professional development materials to the education community.

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Books by NEA Members

Susan B. Anthony: A Play
Darlene E.R. Resling. *Learning Well, 64 pp., $7.95, 800/645-6564.* Part of a series called "Dramas for the Classroom," this play about the famed suffragette includes vocabulary development, time line activities, values discussions, geography exercises, comprehension questions, and more.

Allies and Mates
Gordon L. Steinbrook. *University of Nebraska Press, 182 pp., $30, 800/755-1105.* This Nebraska history teacher writes of his experiences as an "artillery forward observer" with Australian and New Zealand allied troops during the Vietnam War.

Teaching with Calvin and Hobbes
Mary Santella-Johnson and Linda Holmen. *Playground Publishing/Kids Kollectibles, 188 pp., $21.95, 800/895-5437.* This lighthearted curriculum is geared to kids in grades 4-8 and teaches vocabulary, reading comprehension, language skills, creative thinking and writing, problem-solving skills, social skills, and cooperative learning.

Memoirs of a Depression Bum
Robert G. Baldwin as told to Dorothy Baldwin. *Windswept Press, 108 pp., $9.95 plus $3.50 s&h (New York residents, add 8 percent sales tax) to P.O. Box 299, Interlaken, NY 14847.* This tale of fortune recounts the three years that one young man spent wandering and trying to support himself during the Great Depression.

The Quality Road
Judi J. Call. 125 pp., $13.95 plus $2 s&h to P.O. Box 7291, St. Petersburg, FL 33734. Subtitled "a guidebook of tools for school transformation," this book prescribes a systems approach to classroom management and continual improvement.

Letters

Keep Funds Flowing

For me, a middle school band director, fundraising (Debate, February) is a must. Few classrooms have to maintain and update equipment worth over $100,000. I am very lucky that my school district allocates a fair amount of money to the music department, but our needs increase every day. The rest of the money must come from somewhere.

In today's day and age, having the opportunity to take students on a "real-world" experience is invaluable, and fundraising can help make this possible.

Remember, school isn't just the "core" classes. Some of us in the "encore" classes feel that we serve an important purpose as well.

George Dragoo
Lead, South Dakota

Pot Shot

It seems to me that Dr. Johnston left out the most important point in answering the question about how to reply when a young person says, "Your generation smoked pot, so what's wrong with it?" (Health, February).

Not all of our generation did smoke pot! It's quite likely that more than half did not. No child should be left with the implication that "everyone did it." They need, instead, the reassurance that they need not take part in drugs to be "normal."

Ward Ellsworth
Issaquah, Washington

It's No Secret

I'm personally insulted by the cover headline: "What's the Secret to Teaching Reading? Right now, Dot Fowler may be the only teacher who knows" (January).

I can assure you Dot Fowler is not the "only teacher who knows." Those of us who study, use our common sense, fine-tune our programs to include a wide variety of helpful skills and strategies, and ignore the politicians' mandates are successful.

It's shameful that NEA has added its voice to the myth that teachers don't know what or how to teach.

Harriet Wood
Weathersfield, Vermont

Your January cover story is the best article I've read in a long time about teaching reading—except that Dot Fowler is not "the only one who knows." I remember using the very same methods in 1939!

Esther Frey
Mt. Morris, Illinois

Dot Fowler shares seven "secrets" to teaching reading—but has yet to discover the eighth, which is how to motivate children to read.

It's no longer enough to use good techniques to teach skills. We have to motivate students to practice those skills. Reading is a practice skill, and nothing motivates children to read like a computer-managed reading motivation program, like Electronic Bookshelf or Accelerated Reader.

Using these programs, many teachers have learned how to motivate students of every ability level at every grade level to become great readers.

Sue Jones Erlenbusch
Berkeley, Missouri

Too Many Gifted?

I was glad to see Patti Bricker's coherent argument that too many kids are labeled gifted (Debate, January). While every educator will agree that all kids possess gifts, it has become a disservice to label so many "gifted."

In one of our local schools, more than 25 percent of the students in one grade are labeled "gifted," but not a single one managed to get a 4 on our state writing assessment, which uses a 1-4 scale.

I'm afraid some gifted and talented classes may be better labeled "remedial gifted."

Joel Glazier
Wilmington, Delaware

Why not drop the label "gifted students" altogether? What a burden that would lift from the child who's a natural mathematician but a poor reader, or vice versa. Let's call these kids "gifted learners" and free them to be "normal" children.

Bettye Casey
Roswell, New Mexico

Build Status, Not Bridges

The article, "A Bridge for Paraprofessionals," (Newsmakers, January) has worthwhile information about teacher training and recruitment, but makes the grave error of presuming that every paraprofessional aspires to a teaching degree.

Parapros are among the most over-utilized and undervalued professionals employed in the public schools. But let's work to see that proper remuneration is provided right where they are, not because they aspire to be the certificated person in the classroom.

Peggie Critzer
Bel Air, Maryland

Depressing News

Psychologist Kevin Dwyer's comments—that "true depression is biological," that some children have a "genetic predisposition to depression," and that such children should be treated with medication (Health, January)—belonged on the Debate page.

Many people believe, as I do, that all people's emotions and behaviors, including extreme unhappiness or depression, are caused by social, economic, and political factors, such as powerlessness in society.

So instead of rushing to treat unhappy kids with drugs, let's help young people by fighting for the elimination of poverty, racism, sexism, and heterosexism in our society.

Lenny Lapon
Springfield, Massachusetts

In researching depression, I've found no blood test, brain scan, or other biological test that can make a definitively differential diagnosis between "true" depression and "situational" depression.

We can agree that depression isn't a weakness or a character flaw. Beyond that, we need to be responsive to the needs of children and their families and be wary of simplistic explanations.

Theresa Dietiker
East Lansing, Michigan

Supporting ESPs

Thanks to Karen Mahurin ("Conquering the Divide Between Teachers and ESPs," Letters, January) for representing an underpaid, unappreciated, but vital sector of public education.

As a new NEA member—but a long-time school support worker—I was happy to see such a supportive article for education support personnel in *NEA Today*.

Mahurin can speak for me anytime!

Cheryl Mays
Cobb County, Georgia

I read Karen Mahurin's letter with great interest. My wife and I are Professional Certified Adolescent Transportation Specialists, a.k.a. school bus drivers.

I've heard teachers say that bus drivers have it easy, because all we have to do is drive the bus and drop the kids off.

What they don't realize is that while I'm driving, I'm also responsible for watching seven mirrors, two dozen windows, eight gauges, six warning lights, six dozen faces, three lanes of traffic, a two-way radio, bicyclists, cars with inattentive drivers, and daydreaming pedestrians.

It'd be nice if some teachers and administrators would ride along with us once in awhile. They'd get quite an education.

Stan Weir
Haysville, Kansas

Social Insecurity

Your article, "The Benefits of Turning 65," (Money, January) is excellent, as far as the information given is concerned. But teachers planning on Social Security from such districts as Los Angeles Unified will be in for a nasty surprise with the so-called "offset" from the public school pension. Perhaps it would be helpful to mention such a fact.

Edwin Follick
Los Angeles, California

Wright for the Palm Beach Post

Letters from: Antarctica

It's a Nice Place, But I Wouldn't Want To Live There

Iowa science teacher Paul Jones prepared for his recent trip to Antarctica by wearing leg weights and a 30-pound backpack, investing in $40 thermal socks, and resisting his students' advice to camp out in the school food freezer. Once he arrived in the McMurdo Dry Valleys as part of the National Science Foundation "Teachers Experiencing Antarctica" program, Jones did research and answered students' questions on the Internet. Here are a few of his "letters" home.

November 14: Made it to the McMurdo station today. We flew in the C-141, the biggest plane America has—and it was still more than five hours from Christchurch. We were crammed in like Iowa hogs. It was the last trip the big jet will make this season, because the sea ice runway is beginning to get thin—at the moment, it's nine feet thick—and unsafe for big jets. I'm so tired I plan to put in my ear plugs, cover my eyes to keep out the 24-hour-a-day sunlight, and zzzz away.

November 16: Got on a bus with Navy people going to the Ice Caves. You have to pretend you're a seal and just slide head first down this little hole. It opens up into big spectacular rooms hollowed out by the ice. Coming up: helicopter safety training and snow survival school.

November 19: You would never believe what a few hours in a sleeping bag on the snow can do to revive you. Heading back to McMurdo on the snow cat, we were told that an emergency situation was developing and that we had 20 minutes to get a tent up, wind wall constructed, and stove lit. It was a test, of course, and we made it. I'm ready for the Dry Valleys. I can do this.

November 23: Had my first little accident today. I was trying to get a water sample from the stream, which is 10 feet wide and one inch deep. As I walked out into the little delta, the frozen sand gave way, and I went up to my knee into the stuff.

Luckily, I didn't lose my balance and fall face down, but water went into my boot and I had a wet foot. I had to go back to camp and change. This time, I only got my feet washed, which I needed anyway. But if I had fallen down, big time trouble.

November 25: Saw my first Antarctic life form other than a skua bird eating from the McMurdo garbage can. There was some green algae growing along the stream side. [Jones later saw seals, penguins, and killer whales.]

November 27: Thanksgiving Day in Antarctica, one I will never forget. Light snow, heavy clouds. I knew right away it was a helicopter no-fly day. We could stay at the Lake Fryxell hut and eat canned turkey for dinner, but that didn't sound good.

The group decided to hike the six miles back to base. I really wondered if I could do it, but I made it in time for a beautiful Thanksgiving dinner. First time I ever had turkey gravy from a coffeepot.

December 2: I worked in the lab all morning. I had to weigh my samples after they had gone through the hot furnace to burn all the organic material away. I then calculated the percent of organic carbon and had to record these figures. I was a fair operator, but just didn't know all the short cuts that really help out. Every teacher should be a student every now and then.

December 4: We took the one-hour ride to the glacier and did the necessary surveying. There was barely enough water moving for me to sample. Heading back, I rode in the sled. With the rough lake ice, it was similar to riding a rubber raft through the Grand Canyon. High mountains on each side of me. The wind was so bad that I could only look straight up.

December 5: Slept in the snowmobile shed out on lake ice last night. I like the shed because I can stand up and put my pants on. With the small tents, I have to lay on my back with my feet in the air to get my pants on. I'm not quite as young as I once was.

December 11: This may be it for me. I just saw my name on the flight list for tomorrow. I had a great adventure, did a lot of things I never thought I could do.

I learned that, at 57 years old, I could still walk six miles carrying a 40-pound pack, construct a snow trench and sleep in it, scoop snow from the outhouse and use it, and conduct some useful research, too.

The dry valleys may be as close as I'll ever get to Mars, but you never know. I may try for that patch of ice sometime in the future.

Paul Jones is safely back in his classroom of 37 years at the Montezuma Community School. You can reach him at PJones1@aol.com. For more on Teachers Experiencing Antarctica, go to www.glacier.rice.edu.

Editor's note: NEA Today *apologizes for the omission. Public employees in 14 states and some localities are not enrolled in Social Security and aren't entitled to the full Social Security benefit their spouses qualify for. NEA supports a bill now pending to minimize the impact of the "offset" on low- and middle-income retirees. Please check with your local or state NEA affiliate for more information.*

Cease Fire

I find it very discouraging to see NEA promoting Cease Fire as a "national education campaign" (Heads Up, January). The questionable statistics used by this group to promote their anti-self-defense, anti-civil rights agenda would be better used as an example of "junk science."

Try telling the woman who has used her personal defense pistol to deter a rapist that she would be better off with her gun unloaded and locked, or that she shouldn't have one at all.

If NEA truly cares about preventing handgun deaths, it would insist on gun safety education in all our schools.

Rick Cooper
Westford, Massachusetts

Glass Houses

A recent letter writer states that she doesn't want to be associated with a union "that supports and even promotes sexual perversion" (Letters, January).

I want to be involved in an inclusive union, not the exclusive, judgmental, and prejudicial one the letter-writer would apparently like to belong to.

Until educators can be inclusive in their own ranks, inclusion and acceptance within society and in schools is an impossible goal. To do anything less than encourage complete acceptance and compassion is to miss the point entirely.

Melia Hughes
San Jose, California

Four Cheers

For the first time in many moons, I've actually found things to cheer about in *NEA Today*.

In your November issue, I can't help but be thrilled with the idea of peer assistance and review (Cover story). I'm impressed with your "hero" Judy Briganti, cited for reaching out to her church for support of public education (Heroes & Zeroes).

It's about time NEA starts supporting the educators who are finding ways to recognize religious holidays in the classroom (Students & Strategies). And, it seems we have a winner in Barbara Kelley, the new chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Newsmakers).

What a blessed glow of light!

George Lewis
Weed, California

Let's Talk

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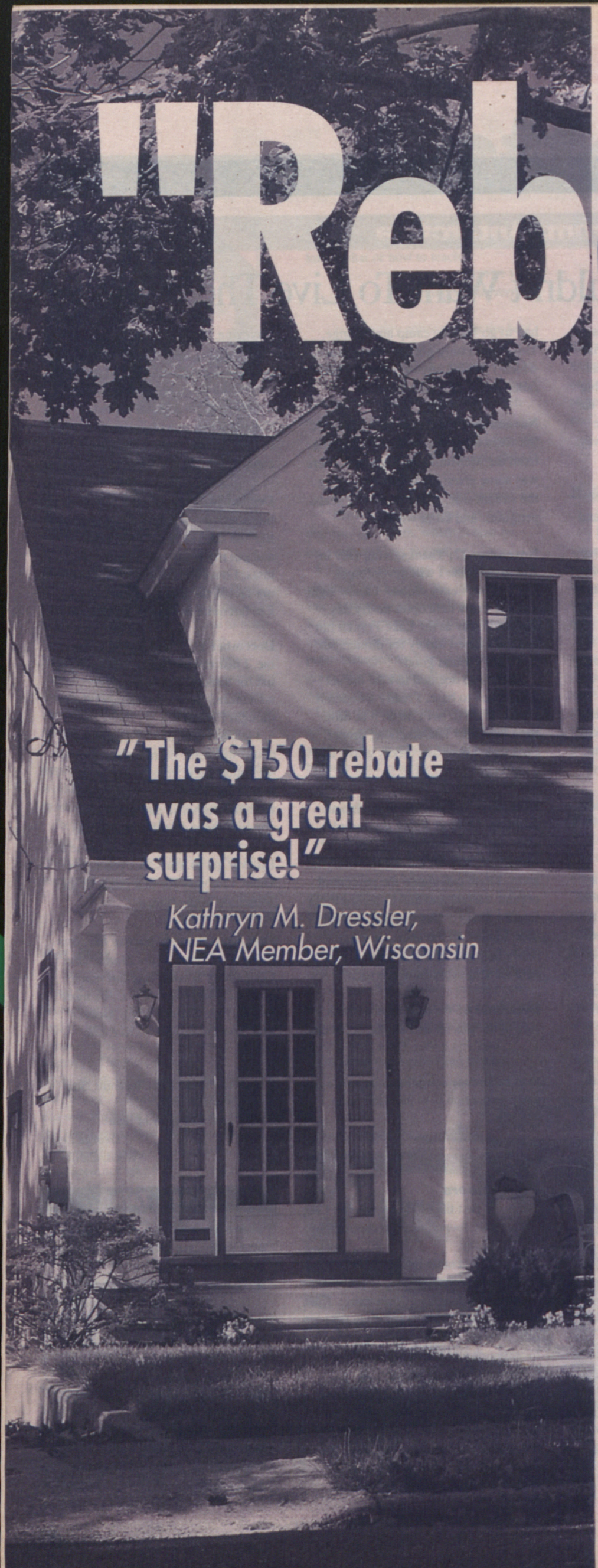

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